PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTY-SECOND YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1992-93

COMPRISING PERIOD
7 June—18 June 1993

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OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 27 APRIL 1992]

FORTY-SECOND YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 226**

TWENTIETH VOLUME OF SESSION 1992-93

House of Commons

Monday 7 June 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefit Payments

1. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will further review the arrangements for the payments of benefits.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lilley): My Department has made significant progress in modernising and streamlining the delivery of benefits. For instance, clearance times for most major benefits have been reduced by nearly a third in the two years since the creation of the Benefits Agency. The Benefits Agency has published proposals on moving towards a one-stop service so that each claimant can obtain a comprehensive service covering all benefits from one point of contact.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Secretary of State tell me how I am now to reply to the cries of concern and anguish being expressed by my constituents in West Cumbria and throughout the north-west region over the prospects of cuts and revisions in invalidity benefit, in housing benefit and in sickness benefit, which can only generate even greater insecurity in families who already live on the breadline? Does the Secretary of State understand that people throughout the country are deeply concerned about what is happening in his Department?

Mr. Lilley: I suggest that the hon. Gentleman responds in two ways. First, he should speak to his Front-Bench spokesman who has been deliberately scaremongering. Secondly, he should refer his constituents to the exchange between myself and the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) on 19 May, when I asked him to name a single scare that he had run in the whole of the past year which had come true. He failed to do so because he could not do so. He is a scaremongerer. We are in the business of improving the benefit system—that is what our long-term review is designed to achieve.

Mr. Alan Howarth: In my right hon. Friend's proper concern to ensure that benefits are provided both cost effectively and in a manner convenient to clients, will he, with colleagues in other Departments, look again constructively and sympathetically at the case for allowing local authority social services departments to make cash payments directly to severely disabled people to enable them, when they wish to do so, to make their own arrangements for personal and domestic assistance?

Mr. Lilley: I recognise the important part that my hon. Friend has played in this question. He was concerned to ensure that there was a cash element and we did achieve a cash element in the disability living allowance. My hon. Friend would like it to go further. We were not able to make it possible for local authorities to give cash grants —indeed, they do not have the legal power to do so. However, I will keep the matter under continuous review. I recognise the importance of my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Bradley: The fears of claimants throughout the country, not only in the north-west, are about the level of benefits. They are especially concerned following the imposition of VAT on fuel. Since the Secretary of State for the Environment stated that pensioners will be more than compensated—I repeat, more than compensated—for the imposition of VAT on fuel, will the right hon. Gentleman

allay the fears of millions of pensioners, both those on benefit levels and those just above, and tell us today exactly what that compensation will be?

Mr. Lilley: I have made it clear that I shall be announcing in the normal way—in the uprating statement in November—the arrangements that we propose to make to give extra help to the most vulnerable groups. That is over and above the automatic reflection of the increase in the cost of living that comes through in all benefits in the subsequent November. We will have extra help in the pockets of people in the most vulnerable groups at the time when the increased cost comes through.

My right hon. Friend made it quite clear in that interview that he had referred to the additional money that we have already put in people's pockets from April this year. [HON. MEMBERS: "More than compensated."] Oh, he did. He referred to the change in arrangements that means that no one will have to pay a penny of council tax. For the most vulnerable groups, that is worth £2·90 a week.

Mr. Ward: In reviewing the arrangements for paying benefits, will my right hon. Friend look again at the arrangements for so-called new age travellers? It seems that those people can still claim benefit. They are clearly not available for work; they are an absolute scourge on the south-west of England; and they are taking up a lot of police time in our constituencies.

Mr. Lilley: I understand the great concern that is felt both by hon. Members and by people at large at any thought that people who are not entitled to benefit are ripping off the system—whether they are new age travellers or not. My hon. Friend will remember the changes that I made last year, which meant that people who are not actively seeking work and make no pretence of doing so will not be entitled to even the hardship rate of income support. I am pleased to say that during one large gathering—called a rave, I believe—at which several thousand of these gentlemen and ladies were present, only 100 people made any request for benefit.

2. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much he expects to pay in 1993-94 in compensation for late payments of benefits under the new compensation arrangements announced on 4 May.

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): The revised compensation scheme significantly improves the arrangements that have been in place since 1977. It is not possible to predict how much will be paid in 1993-94. However, we expect some 80,000 to 90,000 people to benefit from the special scheme for disability living allowance customers, at a cost of around £3 million.

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful to the Minister for the statement that he made. Does he not accept, however, that much more important than compensation for late payment is prompt payment of benefit to which people are ordinarily entitled? In that context, will he tell us what is the review procedure for ensuring that the backlog is reduced, what rights people have to enable them to deal with maladministration resulting in benefit delays of the sort with which his statement of 4 May was intended to deal and, above all, how organisations such as the Drink Crisis Centre in my constituency—which is owed more than £50,000 by the Benefits Agency—can expect to be able to secure prompt payment so that people suffering hardship today, rather than in the future, can be compensated at the time at which they are meant to be paid?

Mr. Scott: If the hon. Gentleman has a look at what is being achieved by the Benefits Agency in the delivery of benefits, he will find that there have been substantial improvements. For example, income support, in respect of which we set a target of five days, is now being delivered in 3·5 days on average and social fund decisions, which were being made within seven days, are now made within 4·3 days. That improvement in performance is reflected across the board.

There is a specific question about DLA later and I prefer to deal with that subject then.

Mr. Sweeney: Can my right hon. Friend tell the House what the Benefits Agency is doing to try to speed up the payment of disability living allowance?

Mr. Scott: Yes. As my hon. Friend will be aware, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency announced some months ago the specific actions, which included an increase in the number of staff, the establishment of remote processing units and the working of overtime. Those measures have delivered: virtually the whole backlog of DLA claims has now been cleared and the benefit is being delivered ahead of the targets that we have set.

Mr. Jim Marshall: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that one of the objectives of the system should be to ensure that unnecessary fears are not placed in the minds of recipients of benefits? In that context, does he further accept that there is a great deal of fear among old-age pensioners—fear that has been generated not by my right hon. and hon. Friends but by the interpretation placed on the future intentions of Ministers by organisations representing post offices and by the popular press? In the light of the words of the Secretary of State a few weeks ago, will the right hon. Gentleman give a firm undertaking that no changes will be made in the present system under which old-age pensioners and others can receive their benefits through sub-post offices?

Mr. Scott: I cannot do better than to reflect the remarks of my right hon. Friend not a few months ago but a few moments ago, which was that our aim is to secure an improvement in the present system of social security, including the delivery of benefits to those who are entitled to them. We regret as much as anyone the scaremongering that takes place among Opposition Members.

Social Security (Aims and Objectives)

3. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will outline the aims and objectives of the social security system.

Mr. Lilley: Our aim is to ensure that people have the means to cope with the main risks and needs that they face during their lives from their own or their employers' provision, from contributory benefits or from the state safety net.

Mr. Burns: I am very grateful to my right hon. Friend. Does he agree that the overriding priority of the social security system must be to provide help for the genuinely less well off? Will he confirm whether he has seen

suggestions that have been floating around for using the tax system to claw back universal benefits and for the possibility of ending the universal provision of child benefit? Given that those proposals are being put about by the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, does not he think that it is time that the Labour party stopped shedding crocodile tears and spreading scare stories and came clean about what benefits Labour would tax and what benefits it would cut?

Mr. Lilley: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of ensuring that the focus of our benefit system is increasingly on those in greatest need and about getting the Opposition to come clean about their proposals. The Labour party spokesman is present so perhaps he can comment on the proposal of his colleague, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett), that we should merge the tax and benefits systems. That can only mean means testing every universal benefit. Is that not what it means? Is that Labour policy or can the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscaden (Mr. Dewar) explain it?

Mr. Dewar: May I first observe the niceties and courtesies of the House by welcoming the hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague) to the Government Front Bench? I doubt whether he will be able to fill in full technicolour the role played by the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe), but we will all watch with interest the development of someone whom the *Yorkshire Post* described as

"Just William: the schoolboy sensation becomes a Government Minister."

With regard to the question, is it the Secretary of State's view that reflecting and questioning the expressed views of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury amounts to scaremongering? If he is concerned about the fears that are undoubtedly arising from the present review, would it not be sensible for him to trim off now some of the more damaging examples? For example, will he rule out the taxation of invalidity benefit and any changes in eligibility designed to exclude people who are genuinely struggling with ill health? Will he make it clear now that the housing costs of the poor will not be unreasonably increased by mean-minded changes in housing benefit?

Does not he recognise that the fears of those struggling to make ends meet on limited incomes are greatly increased by the failure of the Secretary of State and his like to slam the door on schemes that would spell disaster for some of the most vulnerable in our community? He is in government. He has the power to legislate. I think that he should clear up the situation.

Mr. Lilley: I can respond very frankly to that. I can whole-heartedly and unequivocally assure the hon. Gentleman that none of the changes from our long-term review will make vulnerable people worse off or, in the hon. Gentleman's words, will be unreasonable. However, I do not expect that in any way to influence his campaign of scaremongering or that of his hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) who, on 29 October, released some documents allegedly from my Department which, he said, showed that it was

"the poorest, weakest and frailest who have been targeted to pay the price"—

blah, blah, blah—

"in the coming PES round."

He was wrong, but what has he done? He leaked exactly the same documents last week and made different assertions about what they indicate—never knowingly underleaked.

Mr. Sykes: In view of the disaster that overwhelmed my constituency this weekend when one of our greatest hotels slipped into the sea, will my right hon. Friend ask the local manager of the benefits office to make an urgent visit to the area to help those most in need who have been affected by this most dreadful event?

Mr. Lilley: I realise what impact that very sad event must have had in my hon. Friend's constituency. I will certainly convey his point to the local benefits office. It has a record of prompt response to such emergencies, and I am sure that it will deal with the matter appropriately.

Mr. Frank Field: Does the Secretary of State accept that, although every political party has a duty to taxpayers to look carefully at the size and delivery of benefits, the review that he is undertaking is Treasury-led and is about cutting the size of the social security budget? Does he further accept that if the Government got the unemployment level down to the level that they inherited from Labour in 1979 and recouped merely half of the tax cuts going to the richest 1 per cent. of the population, there would be no crisis in public sector borrowing?

Mr. Lilley: Although I normally agree with the hon. Gentleman on quite a lot of things, I would not agree that the review is Treasury-led or that the objective is to go back to a lower level of benefits—certainly not the much lower level of benefits that we had under the Labour Government, since when we have increased spending by two thirds.

What we want is a better system which ensures that the most vulnerable people in society are protected and that all of us have the means to cope with the needs and variations of life. But to do that we must make sure that the benefits system is affordable. It cannot indefinitely outstrip the economic means that the country has to pay for it. If it did so, it would become unsustainable. That would be the greatest betrayal of those in need and damage the economy. We have a long-term review to ensure that we have a better, but sustainable, benefits system which is growing at least in line with what we can afford to finance.

Mr. Rowe: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that in recent years the disincentive for people to work because they are on social security has been greatly reduced? Will he confirm also that many people are inhibited from going back to work because of the threat to their housing benefit? Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that he will take that matter very seriously in his review?

Mr. Lilley: On the latter point, I can certainly reassure my hon. Friend that we will take into account such matters when we review those aspects of the benefits system in the long-term review. My hon. Friend is right; there are still some people who face disincentives to work, and we have to keep them under close review. Equally, we have removed the appalling situation in which people actually earned less when they returned to work than they did when they were on benefits. The over 100 per cent. withdrawal and tax combined rates have been eliminated.

Disability Living Allowance

4. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if his Department has now resolved the backlog of disability living allowance claims.

7. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the current backlog of claims for disability allowance.

Mr. Scott: The Benefits Agency has been meeting its primary clearance targets for new claims since February, and only a very small number of older disability living allowance claims remain to be processed. I am pleased to tell the House that the one millionth award of DLA and attendance allowance was made last month. That amply demonstrates the success of those benefits.

Mr. Pike: I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will accept that, following the introduction of DLA in April last year, the original situation was quite appalling. May I express my thanks to the hotline people for their assistance to Members of Parliament? However, it should never have been necessary to establish a hotline for hon. Members. Indeed, I am sure that the many cases in my constituency represented only a fraction of the cases in which there were delays. May we be assured that such a situation will never occur again? If there are delays for any reason, will the Minister consider people being notified of why there is unacceptable delay so that they will know exactly what the situation is?

Mr. Scott: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that Ministers and the Benefits Agency have studied very carefully the lessons to be learnt from the introduction of DLA and the delays that occurred because of the unexpected surge at its introduction. I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman has been pleased with the service that he has had from the hotline, but it was only one of a number of steps that were taken to enhance the ability to respond by telephone to Members of Parliament, those who advise customers of the Benefits Agency and customers themselves. A very great deal has been done. I am delighted to say that we have made substantial improvements. It is worth pondering, particularly by Opposition Members, that in the first year of DLA we delivered that benefit to seven times as many people who received mobility allowance when the Labour Government introduced it.

Mr. Skinner: Why does the Minister not have the guts to tell us how many people have died since the backlog built up in the first instance? Will he tell the House that no fewer than 1,000 people have died waiting for benefit and that, as a result, that money has been saved? If some of the beneficiaries live to be old enough to get their pension, they will find that the Post Office has been closed by this lousy rotten Government and they cannot get it. I have two proposals for the Minister. One, use the computer that collects income tax to get those benefits paid and, secondly, he should pay some of the people who cannot get their benefits out of the Norman Lamont legal aid defence reserve fund.

Mr. Scott: As ever, the hon. Gentleman goes way, way over the top. I do not know from where he invents his figures, but the fact is that the delivery of disability benefits is better than it has ever been in the history of their payment. There is no question of any savings accruing to the Government from any delays that have occurred. We are determined not only to maintain but, where possible, to improve the level of service that we now give.

Mrs. Roe: I should like to take the opportunity to congratulate my right hon. Friend on the success of the DLA. That benefit has been introduced in one go, unlike the mobility allowance which it took the Labour party four years to phase in.

Mr. Scott: I agree very much with what my hon. Friend has said. The staff of the Benefits Agency deserve our congratulations and not our criticisms on their performance. This year, we set the Benefits Agency an enhanced target of delivering 65 per cent. of claims within 30 days. Today, it is delivering 75 per cent. of DLA claims within that period.

Mr. Hawkins: I share my right hon. Friend's pleasure in the fact that the service to DLA claimants has improved dramatically, but he is aware of a number of cases involving my constituents which are still subject to considerable delays. I have sent him the detail on those cases and I am grateful to him for the attention that he has already given to them. Will he take further steps to ensure that the speed of service in dealing with outstanding claims is yet further improved in the light of the welcome improvements that have already been made?

Mr. Scott: I will certainly do that. I am aware that a handful of claims—about 40—that were made in 1992 are still outstanding for a variety of reasons. In a number of cases, people may have failed to respond to inquiries by the Benefits Agency or sometimes a payment is already in payment because of a duplicate claim. It is worth the House grasping one figure in particular: of the 705,000 claims for DLA made last year, 99·99 per cent. are in award.

Mr. Eastham: I am sure that the Minister will be aware that many hon. Members have processed cases to the Department that have been subject to long delays, sometimes due to the loss of papers and goodness knows what. I recently dealt with a case that had been considered for more than two years before the person finally got his entitlement. Is it not correct that there should be some kind of cut-off line, so that after three months or six months, when a claimant is finally paid his benefit, he should at least be paid interest on his entitlement? The same thing happens to people who pay income tax and who are charged interest if they delay in paying the Government.

Mr. Scott: If the hon. Gentleman looks at the matter, I think that he will find that the Department has improved its arrangements for compensation for the late payment of benefits. Special arrangements have been made for those who have been affected by delays in the delivery of DLA.

Maxwell Pensions Unit

6. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has for the future of the Maxwell pensions unit; and at what point he will consider its work complete.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. William Hague): The Maxwell pensions unit

still has an important role to play in assisting the pension scheme trustees, the liquidators and others in their work. We expect such assistance to continue for some time.

Mr. Gunnell: I am sure that the Minister is aware that he has inherited a very heavy responsibility towards Maxwell pensioners, which is also a source of concern to many hon. Members. He will be aware that many thousands of those pensioners have had 18 months of uncertainty about whether their pensions will be met in full. There has been some success in recovering funds. At what stage would the Minister be prepared to guarantee that Maxwell pensioners will receive the sum that they anticipated receiving before the death of Robert Maxwell?

Mr. Hague: I am certainly aware of the depth and scale of the problem described by the hon. Gentleman, and I fully understand and sympathise with the anxieties expressed and uncertainties faced by Maxwell pensioners, many of whom are connected with the Headington plan in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. It is worth reflecting on the enormous progress made during the past year. The long-term gap between the Maxwell pension scheme's assets and liabilities seems likely to be less than £100 million. The scheme trustees have told the Select Committee that they are guardedly optimistic about meeting their pension liabilities in full. That represents a huge improvement on the scheme's position only months ago. There is no question of using taxpayers' money to compensate people for the consequences of fraud, but the Government, the Maxwell pensions unit and all involved have made tremendous progress during the past few months—I hope that they will continue to do so.

Mr. Page: I unreservedly congratulate my hon. Friend on his appointment which, I am sure, will be one of a number of glittering future appointments——

Mr. Skinner: The Minister should make the hon. Gentleman his Parliamentary Private Secretary.

Mr. Page: That would be too much. I pay tribute to the work of the Maxwell pensions unit. Together with the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), I perhaps have the most experience of the work of the unit, which has done a magnificent job in helping the Maxwell pensioners. That fact must not be forgotten by the House. Will my hon. Friend lift his eyes to the horizon to see whether his Department can work on legislation to protect future occupational pensions and protect the innocents of the future from the Maxwells of the future?

Mr. Hague: I thank my hon. Friend for his generous welcome, and I also thank the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) for his earlier words of welcome. My hon. Friend was right to speak of the outstanding work of the Maxwell pensions unit, which, since it was established, has done a tremendous job in helping to mediate in its investigatory role. My hon. Friend will appreciate that, on the issue of future legislation, the Government can make no commitment until the pension law review committee has reported. We expect its report at the end of September. No doubt my hon. Friend will have representations to make then, to which we shall be delighted to listen.

State Benefits

8. **Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to encourage contracting out of state benefits.

Mr. Lilley: The Government have always favoured encouraging people to choose to make extra financial provision for themselves where appropriate. We are committed to introducing age-related rebates to make it equally attractive to people of all ages to join private pension schemes.

Ms Eagle: Can the Secretary of State confirm whether, as part of the current review being conducted, his Department has held meetings with private insurance firms about the possibility of contracting out state benefits and arrangements for the payment of health service and other benefits of the welfare state? Does he realise that extending the privatisation principle to the welfare state will sound its death knell? Where in the last Tory election manifesto did it say that the Conservative party would butcher the welfare state?

Mr. Lilley: The last point made by the hon. Lady is unworthy of someone of her intelligence. A modern welfare state is expensive and we may have to stop doing certain things in order to perform other tasks more successfully. It was not me who said that, but the Labour Co-ordinating Committee. The hon. Lady had better have words with her friends if she is worried about people ceasing to do things in the welfare state. It does not damage the welfare state to enable people to make additional provision for themselves, which was an intrinsic principle on which Beveridge based the system.

We are meeting people in the insurance and pension world to discuss the proposals that I mentioned in my main answer, the arrangements that we shall have to introduce and the consultations that we shall have to hold to enable pension funds to conform to the European Court judgment on the equalisation of private pension arrangements and their co-ordination with a state scheme. We consult on and discuss all these things. There is no question of doing anything surreptitious that will butcher the welfare state.

Mr. Jenkin: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the rapid growth of the Department's budget since 1979 not only reflects our commitment to the most needy but is a cause for concern? Is not the contracting out of genuinely insured benefits to the private sector, where they are genuinely fully funded, an advantage to the people concerned and an advantage to the Department—because that enables resources to be better devoted to those who really need them?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right in both respects. The fact that we have increased public expenditure on the welfare state by two thirds in real terms since 1979 is guarantee enough of our commitment to that system; but my hon. Friend is right to say that the great advantage of private provision—unlike state provision, which is based on pay-as-you-go arrangements with nothing set aside or saved or invested for the future—is that private schemes are fully funded and savings are made and invested in British industry to develop the assets which

will create the resources to pay for pensions and other benefits in future years. That is good for the economy, for the individual and for the welfare system.

Mrs. Golding: This Government seem to spend many thousands of pounds on advice and instruction, much of it to do with the social security system, including contracting out. Will the Secretary of State reply to one of my constituents, who has written to ask me whether the Government will provide a helpful guide setting out the best way in which people can survive on their pensions? Perhaps he will consider starting with another of my constituents, who is 76 years old, who has no savings and who has £67·55 a week to live on. Could the right hon. Gentleman give him any guidance on how he can pay his gas, electricity and water charges, his council tax, fares and telephone charges, and save towards maintenance and repairs of his home? In addition, my constituent has to clothe himself, eat and pay for his one pleasure in the form of a television licence. Will the Secretary of State produce a helpful guide for this constituent?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Lady knows full well that no one in this country has to survive only on the basic pension. Because we have encouraged so many people to make additional provision, two thirds of all new pensioners have occupational pensions on top of the basic pension; a great many other people have other savings and investment income as well, and those who have none receive income support on top of the pension—and other income-related beneits to which they are entitled. We have been able to enhance those benefits because of our success in encouraging people to make private provision and in focusing additional help on those who need it—as we did last October, when we gave £2 more a week to individuals and £3 a week to couples on income-related benefits. In all, £1 billion more has been focused on these very groups in recent years.

My advice is to continue voting Conservative and not to risk going back to Labour, which undermined all pensioners by inflation.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the worst possible world would be means testing for the basic state pension, which would discourage people from making private provision? Is not the future for people in work now to make their own private pension provision; and will the Government continue to encourage them to do just that?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is right. That is precisely the mix towards which Labour Front-Bench spokesmen are moving—discouraging private provision and means testing the basic pension. Then they try to scare everyone with the idea that we would do something so foolish.

Court of Appeal

9. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he now expects the Court of Appeal to resume hearing of the chief adjudication officer's appeal against the Commissioner's decision (CS/27/91); and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Alistair Burt): It is for the Court of Appeal to set a date for the hearing. Although we expect a date to be set imminently, I understand that that has not yet been done.

Dr. Godman: This is one the Government are going to lose. Moreover, more than 450 women in my constituency are directly involved in Commissioner Skinner's enlightened decision. Lord Henley assured me about two months ago that any women suffering hardship would have their invalidity benefit restored. Why is it that when women in my constituency make such a claim to the local officers they are subjected almost to an interrogation, whereas women in other constituencies have had the money paid with arrears of benefit? Why is there a hard line and inconsistency in Greenock and Port Glasgow? Will the Minister investigate this legitimate complaint against those officers in my constituency?

Mr. Burt: To my knowledge, this is the first time that such a claim has been made. The hon. Gentleman well knows that benefits are administered equally all over the country. He also well knows the reason for the current appeal. The case that Commissioner Skinner decided deals with a principle that the Government are not able to accept in relation to contributory benefits. We are waiting for the appeal to clarify the law, and when that has been done the law will be applied equally to all. As I have said, this is the first time that that specific complaint has been made. I will, of course, investigate any evidence that the hon. Gentleman puts to me about inconsistency of the type that he describes.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Wealth Creation

28. **Mr. Stephen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans his Department has to increase the science research councils' emphasis on wealth creation.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. William Waldegrave): The central purpose of the White Paper that I published last month, "Realising Our Potential—A Strategy for Science, Engineering and Technology", was to bring our many excellent scientists and engineers into an even closer working relationship with the users of their research. This will enable them to contribute more effectively to wealth creation and to improvements in the quality of life in general.

Mr. Stephen: Can my right hon. Friend give some indication of reaction to the White Paper from the leaders of science and engineering?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am delighted to say that there has been a widespread welcome. I shall quote just two. The noble Lord Flowers, the Chairman of the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology, wrote:

"I welcome your White Paper and congratulate you warmly on its content and tone."

The four engineering institutions—chemical, civil, electrical and mechanical—said in a joint statement that they welcomed the White Paper on science and technology

"because it identifies correctly the importance of engineering and technological innovation in the process of wealth creation."

Mr. Stevenson: In spite of what the right hon. Gentleman says, the White Paper has its critics. Can the

Chancellor of the Duchy explain why another attitude seems to have been taken by the Department of Trade and Industry? For example, the ceramic, scientific and research establishment in Stoke-on-Trent is waiting for the Department of Trade and Industry to provide £190,000 that is desperately needed. How does that square with the contents of the White Paper?

Mr. Waldegrave: I will, of course, pursue with my colleague the specific matter that the hon. Gentleman raises and write to him. The Department of Trade and Industry has been reviewing its grant schemes and has refocused them, particularly on small and medium-sized firms, which is right. Perhaps that review has delayed matters in this case. I will find out for the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Robert Jackson: My right hon. Friend's important White Paper is based on a careful balance between considerations of utility in science and considerations of scientific excellence. Will he assure us that, in implementing the White Paper's provisions, he will pay proper regard to considerations of scientific excellence, especially in relation to the research councils?

Mr. Waldegrave: I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for the major part that he played in writing the White Paper. His has been a clear voice for science in his constituency and in his work in my Department. I thank him for that. I can give the House the assurance that he seeks. Nothing in the White paper detracts from the importance of the best basic research. We need to do such research, but it must be done against the background of closer interaction between the science base and industry.

Disabled People

29. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to publish a comprehensive charter for the disabled.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. David Davis): None. All charters should address the needs of all those who use the service.

Mr. Gunnell: I am sure that the Minister is well aware of the fact that organisations representing different categories of disabled people are extremely anxious to see comprehensive legislation on their behalf and that 297 hon. Members have signed an early-day motion relating to such legislation. Will he think again about providing at least a citizens charter that would cater for those who are disabled and would tell them what they can expect in a civilised society, even from this Government?

Mr. Davis: The Government understand the hon. Gentleman's point of view. However, the best approach to charters is a service-by-service approach. That is because the people working in that service have targets and performance measures that they can seek to achieve in the interests of the disabled. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be interested to hear that 27 out of the 31 charters contain a direct reference to disabled people.

Mr. Thurnham: I warmly welcome my hon. Friend as he makes his debut at the Dispatch Box. Will he confirm that the Government's commitment to people with disabilities is shown by the trebling in real terms of expenditure on the disabled? Is not that a far better record than the Labour party ever had when it was in power? Has any other Government programme shown such a big increase in spending?

Mr. Davis: I thank my hon. Friend for his congratulations. I shall try to be as helpful to the House in this role as I was in my last. He is quite right to say that the Government have trebled their real commitment to the disabled in the past 15 years. That is not all we have done. We have also made progress on legislation targeted at giving access to new non-domestic buildings, at employment—85,000 disabled people have been helped by specialist advisers—at transport and at many other sectors. That will continue for the future of the Government.

Mr. Wigley: I also welcome the Minister, and look forward to his giving the House the same benefit he gave it in his last job.

However, may I press the hon. Gentleman on the need for disabled people to know what is available to them? In an ideal world, that should be by comprehensive legislation such as anti-discrimination legislation. If such legislation is not forthcoming, there most certainly needs to be a citizens charter. If no such citizens charter is forthcoming, will the Minister add his voice to ensuring that we have an anti-discrimination Bill in the next Session of Parliament?

Mr. Davis: I thank the hon. Gentleman, although I shall not call him my hon. Friend. The reality is that disabled people want practical assistance and practical access to the services that the Government provide, and we are trying to provide that practical service. For example, as part of the new experimental charterline telephone service that we are providing to tell citizens in the east midlands about Government services, there is a minicom service to help hearing-impaired people. Throughout our policy, everything that we do reflects that practical commitment to giving real access to the disabled.

Mr. Sheerman: While welcoming the Minister to his new position, may I ask him to be more vigorous on behalf of people with a disability? That is what they are, as there are no disabled people in our country. All people with a disability and their organisations have consistently asked not only for a charter, but for a commission to safeguard their rights. Is not it about time that his Government listened to the voice of people with a disability and acted in their interests?

Mr. Davis: I am not going to bandy politically correct words with the hon. Gentleman. My interest is in providing the best service possible. That is what we are trying to do. He may think that that is not the right approach, but we are interested in delivering a good service to every single person suffering from a disability.

Citizens Charter

31. **Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether the Government intend to publish a further White Paper on the progress of the citizens charter.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes, in due course. That will show that excellent progress continues to be made.

Mr. Evans: Does my right hon. Friend recognise that education is one of the sectors where there is a

demonstrable need for greater accountability on the part of educationists? Will he confirm that, in due course, arrangements will be made for the parents charter to be adjusted to reflect the additional information that will be forthcoming once the Government have ensured that national curriculum testing has been implemented throughout the country?

Mr. Waldegrave: I can confirm my hon. Friend's remarks. It is extraordinary and wrong that, in this most crucial of all public services, some people are trying to prevent publication of comparative information—despite the fact that almost right across the public sector such information is being made available. The majority of people, both in the House and the country, will regret the current action to block testing.

Mr. Barnes: We used to have serious Question Times about issues such as energy before the Government disbanded the Department of Energy. Now, there are questions about charters, which are a complete and utter waste of time. Does not the Minister think that it is about time that some serious issues were brought before the House?

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has contributed to serious questions because he has not even asked one. Surely he is aware that his Front-Bench spokeswoman, the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam), is so keen on charters that she has claimed that she invented them herself. The hon. Gentleman may be a little out of tune with his Front Bench.

"Reinventing Government"

32. **Mr. Alan Howarth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on his meeting with the authors of "Reinventing Government".

Mr. Waldegrave: I have had meetings with both authors and have been impressed by the way in which they have put forward proposals very similar to ours in the citizens charter, aimed at getting better performance out of public services at a time of spending restraint.

Mr. Howarth: Does my right hon. Friend agree that for a considerable number of years the Government have been putting in place many of the elements of what Osborne and Gaebler term "entrepreneurial government"? Rather than mock the citizens charter, would not the Labour party do better to learn from it?

Does my right hon. Friend further agree that if the approach outlined in "Reinventing Government" is to be developed further here, as I believe it must be, two implications follow—we will need a new and better concordat between central and local government and we shall need more freedom of information?

Mr. Waldegrave: On the latter two points, first, the Government have made it clear that they want good relations with local government. Indeed, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister recently met the leaders of the various associations. Secondly, I assure my hon. Friend that no other Government have taken such steps to widen the publication of information.

On the Osborne and Gaebler point, I shall quote Joe Rogaly, an independent journalist who writes in the *Financial Times*. He said about the Labour party:

"It is as if it not only missed the Osborne and Gaebler bus, it never saw it coming."

That is an accurate description of the Labour party's understanding of these issues.

Ms Mowlam: I want to clarify one point. The Labour party did create charters at the local authority level—in York, Birmingham and Leicester—before the Minister even thought of them. The distinct point is that charters actually work at the local level because there is commitment to accountability and freedom of information, which is not shared by the Government. The Minister was fulsome in his praise of "Reinventing Government" and he quoted Joe Rogaly. Is he aware that the authors said that if market testing is just about skimping on wages, the Government should re-evaluate what they are doing? The authors of the Minister's favourite book asked for that, and for some time we have been asking for a moratorium on market testing. It now appears that the Minister will not meet his targets for market testing that he wanted to achieve by September. Is he now listening to us about moratoriums on market testing as well as about charters?

Mr. Waldegrave: It is not my job to sort out the problems within the Labour party on this matter. Perhaps the hon. Lady should have some discussions with her hon. Friends. It is clear that she has not read the book, which has a strong passage in support of market testing. Obviously, she has also not read the White Paper "Competing for Quality". It is not just about cutting costs; it is about quality. If we can get quality at lower costs, that is certainly what we should do.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the principles of Osborne and Gaebler is that both national and local government should be steering rather than rowing, to put it in their terms? Is not that in line with the Government's commitment to contracting out? Are there not lessons for Labour local authorities, especially education authorities, in their attitude towards grant-maintained schools, which have precisely the independence that is so lauded by Osborne and Gaebler?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is right, although I think that some far-seeing people on the left also understand that. I am sorry that the Opposition do not. John Willman, who used to run the Fabian Society, wrote:

"In the UK it has been the Conservatives under John Major who have seized the 'reinventing' government agenda."

That is true.

Research Vessel Service

33. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what consultation he has had regarding the future of the research vessel service at Barry, Glamorgan.

Mr. David Davis: None. That matter is for the Natural Environment Research Council.

Mr. Morgan: Notwithstanding that buck-passing answer, and despite my earlier congratulations to the Minister on his elevation from the Whips Office, does he agree that the key to the research vessel service's move to Southampton, if it does occur, is that it must remain an independent facility available to all marine science and oceanography university departments and other research bodies in the United Kingdom? The NERC's latest

proposal is that the service will become part of Southampton university's department of oceanography, so the marine science departments in Cardiff, Cambridge, Bangor, Aberdeen and elsewhere believe that they will get the mucky end of the stick and that Southampton will run the whole show. Does the Minister agree that that contradicts the original purpose of the service's move from Barry to Southampton?

Mr. Davis: The hon. Gentleman will forgive me, but I did not realise that universities had become closed societies. The intention behind moving the facility to Southampton is to create a world-class centre for research and development and training on one site, which will make more efficient use of resources and improve support for staff and students. All that is to be welcomed.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Can my hon. Friend confirm that the research vessel service is a classic example of the kind of NERC facility that could be put out to market testing? Should not more NERC services be put out for market testing?

Mr. Davis: My hon. Friend is correct. It is our intention to put out the operational side of the research vessel service to market testing. We would expect to see improved efficiency and quality of service arising from that.

Citizens Charter

34. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received from disabled people's organisations in respect of the citizens charter.

Mr. David Davis: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster had a constructive meeting with the all-party disablement group in December 1992.

Mr. Wareing: My question referred to "disabled people's organisations". Does the Minister think it right —citizens charter or no citizens charter—that a disabled person should be shown the door of a public house simply because he or she is deaf? Does he believe that it is right for it to be legal to discriminate against a disabled person, who can be ejected from a cinema or prevented from taking out an insurance policy? Is that first-class citizenship for the disabled? Will the Government legislate against such practices? If not, what will the Minister do about them?

Mr. Davis: Obviously, no one approves of the sort of behaviour to which the hon. Gentleman refers. The solution is not the creation of legal rights specific to people with disabilities. That would not be practical or effective.

Scientific Links (Japan)

35. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what measures his Department is taking to improve Britain's scientific links with Japan.

Mr. David Davis: I can announce that an advisory group is being set up by the Office of Science and Technology to advise the Government on developing links with not only Japan but all Pacific rim countries. Later this year, we shall host the third in a series of high-level, round-table talks between senior science policymakers from the United Kingdom and Japan. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy will visit Japan in the autumn.

Dr. Clark: Can my hon. Friend confirm that when bilateral meetings with the Japanese take place to discuss scientific links, they will truly be two-way dialogues? Does he agree that it would be inappropriate for us to continue to provide ideas for the Japanese to develop without a balance of information in the opposite direction?

Mr. Davis: My hon. Friend voices a widespread belief, which is not entirely unfounded, that Japanese business scours the world for free ideas. One has to say, who can blame them?—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] The reality is, if Opposition Members will wait for it, that Japan is paying hundreds of billions more every year in royalties to purchase licences, and so on. It is in our interests to encourage that, because we receive more than £1 billion a year in royalty and licence income. As to my hon. Friend's specific question, the White Paper, "Realising our Potential", set out our way of making the best use of British research. That includes technology foresight, which is a Japanese technique for achieving the very aims to which my hon. Friend referred. We will, of course, seek to make the meetings, as my hon. Friend said, a two-way dialogue.

Departmental Papers

36. **Mr. Wicks:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what criteria are applied in decisions on whether to make departmental policy papers available to the public.

Mr. Waldegrave: Ministers and their Departments have a duty to give Parliament and the public as full information as possible about the policies, decisions and actions of government, within necessary constraints such as considerations of national security, protection of privacy and confidentiality of advice given by civil servants to Ministers.

Mr. Wicks: Given the Government's alleged commitment to open government and freedom of information, and given that national security implications are not involved, will the Minister arrange for the publication of the review contained in the public expenditure departmental papers? If he is able to do that, will he also arrange for me to pop round and look at some of the papers this afternoon?

Mr. Waldegrave: No. Discussions within government leading to public expenditure decisions should be—and would be, under any freedom-of-information regime in the world—private to government until those decisions are made.

Points of Order

3.30 pm

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Have you had a request from any Minister to make a statement about the agreement by the Council of Ministers to approve the working time directive that involves the 48-hour week provision? Is not the matter desperately important, given the conflicting advice from Brussels and Whitehall in regard to whether the directive will have the force of law while the Government are contemplating an appeal to the European Court? Should not a statement be made?

Madam Speaker: I have received no such request. No doubt Ministers have heard what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Mr. Bryan Davies (Oldham, Central and Royton): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I wish to raise what I consider to be a gross breach of the conventions of the House; I think that you may agree. I have given notice to the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) of my intention to raise the matter.

A constituent of mine, Susan May, was convicted of murder on 5 May. She has written from Risley prison—an action group formed only two weeks ago has written as well—to the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth, who has a certain reputation—some would say, notoriety—for his interest in the more lurid happenings in the Oldham area, which includes his constituency.

Madam Speaker: Order. Points of order must be addressed to me, and should not be colourful or elaborate.

Mr. Davies: It is a convention, Madam Speaker, for us regularly to forward letters addressed from neighbouring constituencies to the hon. Members concerned. On this occasion, far from forwarding the letters that he had received to me—and despite having announced to the local press that he had done so—the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth has said that he is taking an interest in the case, and will discuss it with the Attorney-General. The Susan May action group has subsequently met me and put me in the picture, and Susan May's solicitors have submitted an appeal.

I ask you, Madam Speaker, to reinforce the conventions of the House, to ensure that the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth does not interfere in my constituency cases or those of any other hon. Member; that he forwards to me the representations that he has received from my constituents; and that he bears in mind that he is singularly ill placed to take up the interests of anyone convicted of murder, given that he regularly professes to be in favour of capital punishment.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I did make a statement in the local paper, because I had received a number of letters about the case. I referred all my correspondents to their Member of Parliament, suggesting that they bring the matter to his attention. It was only when I had gone home for the recess that I found a letter from the prisoner herself—a cry for help, asking me to take an interest in her case.

The House has only just reassembled, and I have not had a chance to discuss the matter with the prisoner's Member of Parliament. He has acknowledged receipt of a letter that I sent to the prisoner, and placed on the Board today. He will understand the details. I do not think that you should have been bothered with the matter, Madam Speaker; it is so petty. Here is someone in prison, convicted of murder; meanwhile, the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Davies) is making petty points about that person in the House of Commons.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Let me deal with that point of order.

That is not a matter for the Speaker of this House. However, the convention is that hon. Members do not act on behalf of another Member's constituents in personal cases. It seems to me that there is a misunderstanding about whether or not letters have been forwarded, or received. That is not, as I have said, a matter for me, and it cannot be resolved on the Floor of the House. I hope that both hon. Members can agree between themselves how this matter is to be pursued.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): On an entirely different point of order, Madam Speaker. Would it be possible, even at this very late stage, to table an amendment to the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill to prevent the purchase of political parties by trade unions? I need your advice, in the light of the remarks of John Edmonds today that we——

Madam Speaker: Order. I can help the hon. Gentleman immediately. I do not give procedural advice across the Floor of the House. If he comes to see me later, I shall do my best to advise him.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I have here a booklet that describes the procedure to be followed by Ministers over the acceptance of presents. The advice that they are given is that they should not accept presents, as Ministers should be under no obligation. Would it be possible for hon. Members to submit questions to the Table Office regarding the representations made by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office, regarding Mr. Nadir who, as you know, has fled justice?

Would it be possible for hon. Members to find out from questions, which I hope could be tabled, why the Secretary of State and the Minister of State made representations about someone who is not one of their constituents? In addition, what proceedings could we take to find out whether anything has taken place which should not have taken place?

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has put to me a most convoluted point of order, but again it is a question of procedure. If the hon. Gentleman wants advice about procedure, he ought to go and see the authorities of the House, or come and see me, as I advised earlier. I am not prepared to give advice on matters of procedure across the Floor of the House.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I wonder whether you could give me some advice on what to do when Ministers state that they cannot answer a question, on the grounds of disproportionate

cost? I asked a specific question about the cost over the next 20 years of the commitment to public sector pensions for civil servants and others. I have been told that the unfunded liability, which does not appear anywhere in Government accounts, is £170 billion. I wanted that figure to be broken down for me on an annualised basis. When one is considering £170 billion of public expenditure, it would surely not be disproportionately costly to be provided with the details of that expenditure.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is arguing about the decision of a Minister. I am certainly not going to discuss such a decision. It is for Ministers to argue for themselves. Perhaps it is because I am looking so fresh after my holidays that there are so many points of order today.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. A few moments ago you said that it was not a matter for you but that it was a convention of the House that Members of Parliament did not take up cases in somebody else's constituency. Will you, then, help us to explain to our constituents how it comes about that not just a Back Bencher but a Minister of the Crown—the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office—was able to take up the case of Asil Nadir, who was not one of his constituents?

Would it not make a lot of sense if he were to come to the House, along with the President of the Board of Trade, to explain the precise relationship between Asil Nadir and the Tory party and the representations that have been made on his behalf?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman will, I am sure, find some parliamentary method by means of which he can tease out those matters.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Further to the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), Madam Speaker. As the Latin quotation——

Madam Speaker: Order. That point of order has been dealt with. Does the hon. Gentleman wish to raise a different point of order.

Mr. Jessel: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I was going to say——

Madam Speaker: Order. I will not take any further points of order on that matter. Does the hon. Gentleman have a fresh point of order for me?

Mr. Jessel: I wanted to say that as the Latin quotation "Non illegitimis carborundum" means "Don't let the bastards grind you down", not "Don't let the buggers get you down"——

Madam Speaker: Order. A little merriment on our first day back is in order, but the hon. Gentleman is going over the top.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Can I raise a serious matter? During the recess, I sent approximately 250 letters from my constituency office to my constituents, quoting a statement made at the Dispatch Box by the Secretary of State for Social Security on 19 May in the debate on automated credit transfer and post offices. He said:

"All small post offices are currently paid a fixed sum, regardless of volume, so people switching to ACT will make little difference to the amount of remuneration they receive." —[*Official Report*, 19 May 1993; Vol. 225, c. 259.]

The problem is that postmistresses in my constituency are challenging that statement, with the result that I—or Parliament, as I am sure that it will apply to many of my hon. Friends—am faced with the expense of sending a further 250 letters to the same constituents to explain that the Secretary of State made a mistake. I cannot say that he deliberately misled the House, but it is for my hon. Friends and the House to decide for themselves what was the intention behind the Secretary of State's statement.

Can you advise us, Madam Speaker? Should I, as a Member of Parliament, be required to correct the record of a statement made by a Minister which, if not deliberately, misled Parliament and meant that I misunderstood? To what extent is it a question of contempt?

Madam Speaker: If it is a question of contempt, the hon. Gentleman should have written to me instead of raising it in this way. It is for all hon. Members to do their best to ensure that their constituents are kept fully informed. If the hon. Gentleman has to send another letter, it is up to him to do so. He is responsible for keeping his constituents informed when they have a particular interest in a matter such as that which he has raised.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I have some sympathy with the difficulties expressed by my hon. Friend, and I am corresponding with the Minister about this matter. Would it not be useful if the record were put straight and a proper explanation given in *Hansard*, so that at least the issue of replying could be simplified by the circulation of the amended version?

Madam Speaker: As the hon. Gentleman knows, some member of the Treasury Bench may take up his suggestion but, at this stage, there is nothing further I can do. I have had no request for such a statement to be made.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I have dealt with the matter to the best of my ability. The hon. Member from the Front Bench, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), was particularly helpful.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am sorry, but Parliament is now required to correct the record as a result of the Minister's statement. I am asking perhaps for a ruling from you on whether it is a Minister's responsibility to have the record corrected rather than mine, as an individual Member of Parliament, using the House's resources.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lilley): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I think that it probably behoved the hon. Gentleman to inform me that he intended to raise the point of order and to take advantage of the fact that he asked the first question on this subject at Question Time, which he did not do. It also behoved the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) not to reinforce a point which is misleading the House.

If the hon. Gentleman reads column 260, the very next column to that which he quoted to his constituents, he will

[Mr. Peter Lilley]

see that I said—I was speaking from memory—that 2,700 post offices were subject to that arrangement. I can now confirm to the House that the exact number is 2,696. It seems to me that the matter is clear in *Hansard*. He is deliberately misleading his constituents. He should withdraw his comments and send 250 letters of apology.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. We have now heard three hon. Members casting serious aspersions against my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates). Would you confirm that Ministers are free to make their views known about constituency matters and about issues raised by constituents to other Ministers? That is confirmed in the questions of procedure for Ministers which was issued by the Cabinet Office in May last year. It is clear from that document that my hon. Friend has done nothing wrong. Opposition Members should withdraw their accusations.

Madam Speaker: If the hon. Gentleman is confirming that point, he should not seek confirmation from me.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Can you confirm——

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Hon. Gentleman should not be so intolerant. Many are rising to make points of order. Hon. Members should be patient and wait their time.

Mr. Grocott: Can you confirm briefly that, not for the first time, the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) has got things hopelessly wrong? The crucial issue is hon. Members looking after the interests of their own constituents. Can you confirm from the Chair—this would be very helpful—that all the representations made on behalf of Mr. Nadir by the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office and by the President of the Board of Trade were not representations made on behalf of their own constituents?

Would it therefore be your guidance to those right hon. and hon. Members that, if they ever make similar representations in future, and on the basis of those already made——

Madam Speaker: Order. I have no intention of making any comments on individual cases that are raised in this manner. It is not a point of order for me.

Mr. Grocott: I think it is.

Madam Speaker: Order. With respect, it is not a point of order for me. No hon. Member should expect me to comment across the Floor of the House on such an individual situation. It is not a point of order.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. It might be helpful to Conservative Members for Opposition Members, when they catch your eye, to tell us whether their allegiance is to the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) or to John Edmonds, the leader of the Labour party in the country.

Madam Speaker: Order. Hilarity is one thing, but this is an abuse of the time of the House.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Have you received any requests from the President of the Board of Trade to make a statement on the circumstances in which pits were closed last week, especially in relation to the home security of miners made redundant? Many of those miners have mortgages and the terms of their mortgage policies give no mortgage protection if they are made voluntarily rather than compulsorily redundant.

Has the President of the Board of Trade asked you for permission to come before this House to explain what steps the Government will take to ensure that at least the homes of the miners who have forcibly been made redundant by British Coal will be protected? As things stand, those miners will lose their homes as well as their jobs, because British Coal insists on calling the redundancies voluntary, when the whole world knows that they are compulsory.

Madam Speaker: I remind the hon. Gentleman and the House that no Minister asks me for permission to make a statement. He informs me that he wishes to make a statement. I have no authority in the matter. I can tell the hon. Gentleman that I have had no such information.

We now come to the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I am most grateful to you. You will know that I was in correspondence with you over the recess on two matters connected with today's proceedings.

First, would it be possible in your view for the Minister during the course of the day to explain why no new immigration rules on asylum or immigration appeal procedure rules are available for today's debate? I checked at the Vote Office a few minutes ago and it confirmed that both instruments are not available. They are extremely important in terms of interpreting the effects of the legislation that we are debating this afternoon.

The second matter concerns the opportunity that the Minister will have today to inform the House about the outcome of the meeting of European Community Immigration Ministers in Copenhagen last week. You will know from our correspondence, Madam Speaker, that it was reported that important decisions with a direct bearing on the substance of this afternoon's debate were taken at that meeting.

I am grateful to the Minister for writing to me today on the matter. He confirms in his letter that

"agreement was reached on, amongst other matters, Resolution on guidelines regarding the admission of particularly vulnerable groups of persons from the former Yugoslavia, and on the harmonisation of national policies on family reunification."

Those matters are of literally life-and-death importance. I believe that, rather than the information being given in a letter to me, the Minister should be given an opportunity as early as possible this afternoon to report to the House on the decisions to which he was party last week in Copenhagen. The decisions have important implications for the many people who are settled in this country who are either applying for refugee status or who have refugee status and who wish to have their immediate relatives join them in this country.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. The House is to discuss an important matter, but half the documentation

that we need to discuss the matter properly is missing and is not available to hon. Members. I refer to the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) in respect of the rules of procedure relating both to asylum and to immigration appeals. Without those documents, we shall be conducting half a debate this afternoon.

Even at this late stage, is it possible to request that those documents—if available—should be made available to hon. Members?

Madam Speaker: Whether the documents relate to today's debate is a matter of opinion. We shall be debating not the Bill, which has already been debated, but Lords amendments proposed to it. Therefore, it is a matter of opinion for hon. Members and Ministers whether the documents to which the hon. Gentleman refers are necessary for our debate.

In saying that, I think that I also respond to the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden). As the hon. Gentleman understands, this is not a general debate on immigration matters. I understand the hon. Gentleman's deep concern, however. Provided that Back Benchers and Front Benches alike remain within the terms of the amendments before us, the Minister can give the House whatever information he wishes. Perhaps we may now come to the amendments.

Orders of the Day

Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Before clause 3

Lords amendment: No. 1, insert the following new clause—*Young unaccompanied asylum seekers*—

" (.—(1) The Secretary of State shall by order establish an advisory panel for the purpose of making advice available to a child who has arrived in the United Kingdom unaccompanied by an adult person capable of looking after him.

(2) The members of such advisory panel shall be appointed from time to time in accordance with the provisions of section *(Appointment and functions of advisory panel)* below and shall have the functions therein described.

(3) A member of such advisory panel is referred to as an asylum-seekers adviser.

(4) Where a child unaccompanied by an adult person capable of looking after him arrives in the United Kingdom and is, or appears to an immigration officer to be, under the age of 18 years and such child has made, or may reasonably be considered as desiring to make, a claim for asylum, the immigration officer shall notify the advisory panel with a view to the child being forthwith referred to an appropriate asylum-seekers adviser for the purpose of carrying out the functions described in section *(Appointment and functions of advisory panel)* below.)."

3.52 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): I beg to move, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss also Lords amendment No. 2 and the Government motion to disagree, and Lords amendment No. 12 and the Government motion to disagree. Amendments Nos. 1 and 2 involve privilege.

Mr. Wardle: Amendments Nos. 1 and 2 would place on my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary a statutory duty to establish a panel of advisers whose function would be to befriend and advise asylum seekers under the age of 16 who arrive in this country unaccompanied by an adult.

The House will be aware that the amendments were passed on Report in the other place and reflect the widely felt and understandable concern that we should be seen to be doing all we can to protect the interests and welfare of unaccompanied child asylum seekers. The Government understand, respect and share that concern.

Our decision not to accept the two amendments is not based on any lack of sympathy for unaccompanied children arriving in this country. As I shall show shortly, we intend to meet in a very practical manner the spirit and purpose of the proposals by Lord Brightman, who moved the amendments in another place. Let me take this early opportunity to thank the noble Lord and commend him for his courteous advice and helpful guidance on such matters.

I should also make it clear that our decision is not based on questions of cost. The amendments would create a charge on public funds and, if this House disagrees with the amendments, the formal reason which will have to be given is that they infringe the privileges of this House.

[Mr. Wardle]

However, as I will show shortly, the Government are prepared to provide resources to help meet the needs of those children in what we believe is a more appropriate way. Therefore, cost is not the issue.

The Government are as determined as anyone to see that the immigration status of such children is resolved with the minimum of delay and stress, and that the proper arrangements are made for their care, accommodation, health and education needs. The real point of difference between the Government's approach and the approach adopted in the amendments is that we do not believe that the creation of a statutory panel of advisers is the best way to protect the interests of this group of children.

I will refer in a moment to our own view of how that should be achieved, but first I want to explain why we do not believe that including a statutory requirement in the Bill for the creation of a panel of advisers and the assignment of an adviser to every asylum-seeking child is either necessary or desirable.

The amendments envisage that the adviser would give advice to the young asylum seeker on immigration matters and on a range of welfare issues, including accommodation, health and education. Dealing first with immigration matters, there may be a belief that, without an adviser to protect their interests, unaccompanied children are at risk of being sent to countries where they may be in danger of persecution or where there is no one to look after them.

I can assure the House that any such fears are misplaced and unfounded. In the first place, the 1951 convention on refugees applies to children in exactly the same way that it applies to adults. The strict issue to be resolved in determining a claim for asylum is the same for a child as it is for an adult—would his removal result in his being sent to a country where his life or freedom would be threatened?

Over and above that asylum issue, simple humanity demands that any immigration decision to remove an unaccompanied child involves consideration of whether safe and adequate reception arrangements for the child can be made. We would not send an unaccompanied child to another country, whether or nor that child had claimed asylum, unless we were satisfied that such arrangements had been made.

Of course we recognise that children who are claiming asylum may need help with the presentation of their cases to the Home Office. The Home Office already funds the refugee legal centre to provide advice to asylum seekers and representation in asylum appeals. That body is currently developing a team of counsellors designated to dealing with vulnerable applicants, including children.

Those counsellors will be specialists in asylum procedures and in preparing and presenting cases. They will have access to a considerable body of knowledge about conditions in countries from which asylum seekers come. We do not believe that it would be sensible for a panel of advisers to seek to duplicate that role.

Meeting the longer-term welfare needs of the child is clearly the responsibility of the appropriate local authority. The provisions of the Children Act 1989 make no distinction on the basis of a child's nationality or immigration status. They apply in the same way to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children as they apply to any other child in this country who has no responsible adult capable of looking after his welfare and interests.

There is a statutory duty on local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of all the children they look after and to satisfy themselves that the welfare of privately fostered children is satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted. In other words, the function which the amendments would confer on a new panel of advisers is already part of the statutory function of a local authority.

The local authority is the body best placed in terms of personnel, experience, facilities and resources to care for the needs of unaccompanied children. To create a new statutory body charged with those functions could create a duplication of effort and blur lines of responsibility.

The amendments appear to recognise that risk by stating that nothing in the two new clauses affects the powers or duties of local authorities. However, as the primary responsibility is to continue to rest with the local authority, it is difficult to see why the functions of the proposed adviser need to be placed on a statutory basis.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The Minister prayed in aid the role of the children's legal centre. He will know that it has advocated a guardianship system or a panel of advisers along the lines of the Brightman amendment.

Mr. Wardle: As I hope to demonstrate to the House, what we propose in the way of a panel of advisers will meet with the approval of the refugee legal centre and other interested parties.

The amendments envisage that the panel will include, so far as is practicable, persons who can speak the child's language, who are familiar with the habits and customs of the child's homeland and who have knowledge of child care legislation and immigration procedures.

We recognise that local authority social services departments may need help in some or several of those aspects, but the extent and nature of the help that is needed will vary from case to case. There may be cases in which the involvement of a person with specialised background knowledge of the child's own country and language is of help both to the child and to the social services, but there might equally be cases in which the local authority is able to meet that need from within its own resources, and the involvement of a separate adviser is unnecessary and might even be counter-productive.

4 pm

Moreover, unaccompanied children might arrive from anywhere in the world and it would not be possible to guarantee—indeed, it seems quite unlikely—that any statutory panel of advisers could provide for every child a person who had the relevant language skills and background knowledge. It is difficult to see how the appointment of an adviser without those qualifications would materially assist the child.

A statutory requirement for the appointment of an adviser for every unaccompanied asylum-seeking child therefore seems too rigid. What is needed is a system which can operate flexibly to provide appropriate response to the needs of each child, to fill gaps where they exist, and to avoid creating duplication of effort or confusion of responsibilities where gaps do not exist. There are existing

responsibilities covering all the needs of children in that position. Inevitably, different needs are covered by different services.

We believe that the crucial task is to ensure that those different services mesh together properly and that those providing the services have the support and specialised advice that they need. It is vital to mobilise and harness the potential sources of help within the various communities that are already here. We believe that those ends will be better achieved by supporting practical, non-statutory initiatives rather than by imposing a new statutory framework that might conflict with other statutory requirements.

The Home Office has agreed in principle to fund a non-statutory panel of advisers, which the Refugee Council has offered to establish and administer. The advisers would be volunteers from the communities from which most children could be expected to come, selected for their suitability for that role, and given the necessary training.

It is envisaged that, when an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child arrives in this country or comes to the notice of the Home Office when they are already in this country and applying, as some do, the immigration officer or the Home Office would notify both the appropriate social services department and the administrator of the new panel, who would offer the services of an adviser to the social services department wherever that was possible and desirable.

The function of the adviser would principally be to ensure that the social services department was aware of the child's wishes and of relevant cultural considerations and that the child understands as far as possible, taking his or her age into account, what is happening and what choices he or she has.

The agreement to fund the panel of advisers is necessarily for one year in the first instance, but that does not indicate any lack of commitment on the Government's part to the longer term view. Public expenditure decisions have to be taken on an annual basis. There is no way in which I can give the House a cast-iron guarantee of a specific level of support in future years, particularly in relation to a new commitment that has not featured in our earlier spending plans, but we certainly intend to give the scheme sufficient support to enable the concept of children's advisers to have a fair period of trial.

We believe that the scheme will——

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): The Minister contradicted himself. I have been taking down some of the points that he has been making. He said, "Cost is not the issue." He has now gone on to say that he cannot give any forward cost commitments. What is the position? Is cost the issue or one of the issues?

Mr. Wardle: I have made it perfectly clear that cost is not the issue. I have explained that I am able to specify only what will be offerred in the first year. I cannot give any guarantees. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson) understands how the Treasury functions, and he understands the rules in these matters. It is not possible for me, particularly with an entirely new operation such as this, to give detailed promises for future years. What I can do is to repeat what I have already said to the House. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman did not hear me, as he sought to intervene.

We certainly intend to give the scheme sufficient support to enable the concept of children's advisers to have a fair period of trial. That is what is most important. The scheme will provide a person to act as a friend and adviser. That will offer a better, more flexible way in which to meet the identified needs of some children than would a statutory scheme. The funding of the proposed Refugee Council panel of advisers is part of a package of Government proposals for supporting and strengthening the ability of existing services to deal with the needs of those children.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): The Minister appears to suggest that the Home Office will fund the Refugee Council's scheme during the first year. What would happen if a larger number of unaccompanied children than expected arrived? Would the council be expected to fund that excess by cutting other funding, or would the Home Office be prepared to increase its grant to enable the council to continue that scheme?

Mr. Wardle: We shall see as we go along. The purpose of the trial period is to match events with our experience. The Refugee Council will operate the panel and, together, we have considered the experience of recent years and the number of unaccompanied juvenile arrivals seeking asylum. We shall watch matters as they go and respond accordingly. We have told the council that we will provide the funding for the first year and then see how it goes.

I realise that time is pressing, and I should like to outline the other initiatives that we have taken. First, in the very near future, the Department of Health will issue to all local authority social services departments a practice guide entitled "Refugee and Asylum Seeking Children Alone in the United Kingdom". It will also issue a training package addressing the training needs of staff working with children outside their culture and families. That should raise awareness of those issues and help the development of the necessary expertise.

Secondly, my right hon. and learned Friend will add to the immigration rules guidance on the treatment of asylum applications by children. I have already received constructive comments on a first draft of those rules on behalf of the Children's Legal Centre, the Immigration Law Practitioners Association, the British Refugee Council and the Save the Children Fund.

Thirdly, we will continue and will put on a more formal basis the arrangements by which the immigration service notifies social services of the arrival, or expected arrival, of groups of unaccompanied children. That will help to ensure that any danger of children falling between the responsibilities of the different services is minimised.

Fourthly, we propose to set up a more formal mechanism, also with that aim in mind, so that when an unaccompanied child is given temporary admission to the United Kingdom, all the relevant details of that child, his circumstances of arrival, links with the United Kingdom and so on will be passed to the social services department for the area in which he will stay, whether or not that child is already in the care of social services.

Fifthly, we recognise that it is desirable to resolve the immigration status of unaccompanied children as swiftly as possible, so that they and the authorities responsible for their care should not be left in doubt for any longer than

[Mr. Wardle]

is absolutely necessary. We are therefore making arrangements to identify such cases and give them priority treatment within the asylum division.

Sixthly, on 3 February, my right hon. and learned Friend, the then Secretary of State for the Environment, now the Home Secretary, announced his intention to provide a special grant to assist local authorities that face exceptional costs arising from the presence in their areas of unaccompanied asylum-seeking and refugee children. The distribution of such children is inevitably uneven, with particular concentrations near the airports and in certain London boroughs. The new grant recognises those pressures and is further evidence of the Government's determination to ensure that the statutory services are able to respond effectively to the needs of those children.

Seventhly, the British Red Cross is compiling a register of unaccompanied children who come to this country to facilitate eventual reunion with their families, where possible. The Home Office and the Department of Health will co-operate fully with the Red Cross in the compilation of that register.

Those seven measures demonstrate our commitment to protect the interests of unaccompanied children and our concern to find sensible and workable ways in which to do that.

Amendment No. 12 appears to have been inserted in another place by mistake. It states:

"Nothing in this Act shall impose any charge . . . on public funds".

Such an amendment is usually inserted in Bills commencing in another place to avoid infringement of the privileges of this House. The Bill has financial implications which mainly arise from the administration of a new system of asylum appeals. Therefore, the amendment should be rejected.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): As we discuss the Lords amendments, the House has its first chance to debate asylum in the light of events during the past few weeks. It gives us all, regardless of party, the opportunity to condemn the divisive and self-seeking speech of the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) last weekend. I hope that the new Home Secretary has had the chance to reconsider the equivocal and slippery response that he made immediately after that speech and will now condemn it without qualification. As the debate progresses, he will have a chance to do so.

The rich vein of prejudice tapped by the hon. Member for Davyhulme in order to improve his chances of selection under the redrawn boundaries is strong and deep in the Conservative party. I hope that the Home Secretary finds the personal and political courage to confront and condemn that deep strain in his party.

Mr. Corbyn: My hon. Friend should give way to the Home Secretary.

Mr. Allen: I should be pleased to do so if the Home Secretary wished to intervene.

The Home Secretary joins the procession of faces whose leadership pretensions have meant that immigrants and even desperate asylum seekers have been viewed not as people but as political footballs to be kicked around in front of the Tory faithful. The previous Home Secretary sought to establish his credibility with the xenophobic right by making life harder for anyone seeking a visitor visa, for students, mothers, the elderly and people coming to this country for marriage ceremonies, christenings or visits to relatives.

That was the tough vested interest taken on by the previous Home Secretary in immigration and asylum. His predecessor, the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) was another graduate from the smarm school and, aided by the tabloid newspapers, he conducted a scurrilous campaign to play the race card just before the last general election. We all expect that that card will be played again before the next one.

Lords amendments Nos. 1 and 2 provide a chance for a new leaf to be turned. I hope that the new Home Secretary will not fail that test, as he failed the test last week. I hope that the message is heard and understood by black and Asian communities up and down Britian. Lords amendments Nos. 1 and 2 show the two-faced approach of Conservative policy—how easily the smile on the Conservative face which is displayed to settled communities in Britain quickly turns to a snarl when another audience is addressed. Perhaps there has never been a Home Secretary more suited to or practised in playing such a role.

A clear moral lead is necessary at this stage in the nation's history. Let us hope that the new Home Secretary provides that lead unequivocally and does not show the slipperiness that he displayed last weekend.

Lords amendments Nos. 1 and 2 show that nowhere are such short-term, hand-to-mouth policies more evident than in the very flawed Bill. We opposed the Bill in Committee and on the Floor of the House, and now even their Lordships have sought to leave an opening or two for the Conservatives to mitigate the Bill's worst defects. The Minister today rejected the statutory scheme to look after child asylum seekers and offered a voluntary non-statutory alternative. That is not good enough for the Opposition.

Perhaps we are being a little mistrustful—why should we not accept the Minister's assurances? Why should the assurances have to appear in the Bill? Why should we not trust the Conservative Government? Part of the answer lies in what the Conservatives have been cooking up with other Ministers in Europe. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) said earlier, European immigration Ministers met in Copenhagen last week. No statements have been given to the House about that. Many of us thought that today's debate might be curtailed by a statement from the Minister about that Copenhagen meeting——

Mr. Charles Wardle: There is never a statement.

Mr. Allen: The Minister makes my point for me when he says, from a sedentary position, that there never is a statement. The whole European dimension of immigration and asylum policy takes place in secret: to use the Minister's words, there is never a statement.

Madam Speaker: Order. I have been following the hon. Gentleman's argument carefully, but would he be good enough to tell me which Lords amendments he is speaking to at the moment?

Mr. Allen: I am making the point, Madam Speaker, that we need the assurances that the amendments seek on the face of the Bill. The amendments try to include in the

Bill certain clear statutory obligations, but the Government are trying to avoid such obligations by opposing the Lords amendments.

So, what was decided in the secret conclave last week? First, Ministers rejected an appeal from Sadako Ogata, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, for the right of family reunions——

4.15 pm

Mr. Charles Wardle: The hon. Gentleman says in one breath that the Copenhagen deliberations were held in secret; in the next, he lists what happened there. I assume that he has seen the press release from the general secretariat of the Council which outlines all the decisions that were taken. He also knows full well that the usual practice since 1986 following such meetings has been that, in response to a written answer, details of decisions are given to the House and placed in the Library.

Mr. Allen: I hope that the Minister is not claiming that he has already given an answer to a written question and that Members should have seen it before this debate. They could not possibly have done so, as this is our first day back.

Hon. Members often mention to you, Madam Speaker, in points of order, that it is not satisfactory that the business of the Government should be reported in press releases or planted questions. When matters of policy and strategy are at stake, they should be reported to the House and statements on them should be made on the Floor of the House.

I was referring to the appeals from Mrs. Ogata in respect of the right of family reunion, which she suggested should be extended to the few thousand Bosnians given temporary admission to the EC. I understand from press reports—not from any communication from the Government—that EC Ministers agreed on guidelines for the admission of particularly vulnerable people from the former Yugoslavia. I understand that their recommendations were:

"As far as possible, arrangements will be made for contacts to be maintained with close relatives"—

that is, with spouses and children.

"In exceptional circumstances, in particular on humanitarian grounds, provisional permission to stay may be granted for this purpose".

The implication is that Bosnian victims of atrocities, many of them children, will not usually be allowed to bring their families to join them in the host country.

These restrictions on children come on top of the Government's appalling record of failing to meet even their own derisory quotas for Bosnian refugees. We were assured in November 1992 that 1,000 people and their dependants could be accepted to this country—a small contribution——

Madam Speaker: Order. I must call the hon. Gentleman to order again, because I fear that he is not relating what he is saying to the Lords amendments. This is not a general Second Reading debate. We are dealing with just three Lords amendments, and I must ask the hon. Gentleman to relate what he says directly to them.

Mr. Allen: My point has to do with children being granted in the Bill a statutory right which is evident in the amendments——

Madam Speaker: Order. Might I ask the hon. Gentleman to which part of the amendments he is referring? I am reading them carefully even as he speaks, and he could help me by telling me which section of the amendments he is speaking to.

Mr. Allen: I am dealing with the amendments in their entirety.

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is speaking generally, but we are not on Second Reading. He must address specific points in the amendments.

Mr. Allen: The amendments refer to the statutory responsibilities that we hope will be placed on the Government. They relate to the dependants of many Bosnians who have not yet been allowed into the country. The Government promised that 1,000 people plus their dependants, many of whom are children and many of whom will be caught by the legislation, would be allowed in.

Lords amendments Nos. 1 and 2 must be incorporated in the Bill because, although we respect the Minister, assurances on this matter are not sufficient. I am afraid that, once again, I must query the Government's track record on assurances, especially in terms of the United Nations convention on the rights of children. The Government have entered reservations on that convention and many organisations and individuals have asked for them to be rescinded. Those reservations exempt the United Kingdom from implementing articles pertaining to immigration and nationality.

Those issues are relevant to the children who are currently separated from their families in the former Yugoslavia and they affect the implementation of several articles. Article 3 states:

"In all actions concerning children . . . the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration."

United Kingdom immigration law does not take any account of the welfare of children.

Article 2 provides that all the convention's rights apply to all children and not merely to those to whom the Government wish the rights to apply. Contrary to article 12 on a child's right to be heard, refugee children are treated like adults in the United Kingdom refugee determination process and are thus denied a proper opportunity to express their views and their wishes.

The Government's track record is one of the reasons why the Opposition wish to see these amendments in the Bill. The legislation must contain the responsibilities and the duties that we want to press the Government to carry out. If the amendments are accepted, they will ensure, for the first time in the United Kingdom, a realistic and comprehensive service for child asylum seekers. The adoption of that service would lead to a profound change from the way that the asylum services have operated since Britain signed the United Nations convention on refugees. We have an opportunity to put into law the principles that should govern our treatment of children as a distinct social group requiring specific attention.

Many people who come to our shores through the air and sea ports arrive full of fear, without friends, not speaking the language and with no one to look after them. They enter a wholly different culture. Many of them are traumatised by their experiences. Sadly, there are many examples that I could give the House, but I shall give one example of a person who would be assisted by the

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amendments. Tamba, a 13-year-old girl from Eritrea, was put on a plane to the United Kingdom by her mother to save her life. The home of Tamba's grandparents, to which she had been sent for safety after she had been assaulted on three occasions by soldiers, had been bombed. The soldiers had threatened to return to her village to find her and, after the bombing of her grandparents' home, Tamba's mother felt that she had no choice but to send the child away.

I am sure that the Home Secretary and his Ministers will have to deal with many such heart-rending stories. I hope that they will bear in mind, in assessing Lords amendments Nos. 1 and 2, that it would be of great assistance, not merely to such victims but to the organisations that seek to help them, to have in the Bill provisions to which we would have to adhere. That would enable us to test the Government's assurances and good will. We are not talking about an insignificant problem. In 1990, there were 128 children in that position. In 1992, there were 185. The latest statistic that we have, from a parliamentary question, shows that, to April 1993, there were 62 children.

Mr. Charles Wardle *indicated assent.*

Mr. Allen: I am glad that the Minister has confirmed that.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): If the reports are true, the British Government, together with other European Community Governments, have adopted a restrictive policy on family reunion. Does not what my hon. Friend has said show that, in months and years to come, as more unaccompanied children come to the United Kingdom, there will be a need for liberal policies on family reunion, rather than such harsh and restrictive policies? Is not it about time that the Minister intervened to tell us clearly what the British Government's policy is on family reunion and what harmonisation of those policies mean?

Mr. Allen: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention and will be glad to give way to the Minister, or to the Home Secretary, if he cares to answer that question. Sadly, given all the conflicts and political disruptions around the world, I am afraid that it is likely that the number of children caught in such conflicts is unlikely to diminish, and it may increase. It is particularly important that the rules, whether they are harsh or tough, are written in the Bill for all to see, rather than being subject to good will or assurances, which sadly, in too many cases in the past, have not been forthcoming when tested in the extreme under the Government.

Hitherto, we have treated child asylum seekers as adults. The UNHCR and the Children Act 1989 recognise that as a serious problem. The UNHCR, along with the British Refugee Council, Amnesty International and the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants recognise and have argued that children such as Tamba and many others in similar positions should not be treated as adults by immigration officials.

In private, many immigration officials have accepted that they do not have social work or child care skills. They feel that the best that they can do is to pass those children on to voluntary and local authority organisations. However, despite the efforts that local authorities put in to looking after those children, many cannot provide the assistance that they may need. There are no formal rules or a comprehensive plan that links social services departments with immigration officials.

Mr. Corbyn: Is my hon. Friend aware that the system for dealing with unaccompanied child refugees is a positive disincentive on any local authority to take on the responsibility for such children, as the authority knows that it will cost it a great deal of money, which it is not likely to get back from central Government——

Mr. Charles Wardle: Shame.

Mr. Corbyn: It is all very well for the Minister to say "Sr j 3-5hame", as he is not the one to have to take on that responsibility. His Government have consistently refused to fund inner-London local authorities, which have needed help to deal with those poor, unfortunate children. His Government cast those children on to the streets, not local authorities.

Mr. Allen: As so often happened in Committee, my hon. Friend has made the point that I was about to come to far more eloquently than I could. We need to ensure that local authorities—this is separate from the clause and I am conscious of the need not to go out of order—are properly funded in the duties that they undertake.

Adopting Lords amendments 1 and 2, which would establish a statutory children's panel, would help children through the complex procedure now being established in the Bill. The panel will be able to help children through the legal process and explore a better understanding of their needs. It will go some way to combining the 1989 United Nations convention on the rights of the child and the Children Act to ensure that children's rights are respected.

We have an opportunity to reflect the needs of the child in the refugee determination procedures, and we should take it. I call on the Government, even at this very late stage, to drop their opposition to a statutorily based children's panel.

4.30 pm

It is interesting to note that section 1(1) of the Children Act 1989 states:

> "When a court determines any question with respect to—
> *(a)* the upbringing of a child . . .
> the child's welfare shall be the court's paramount consideration."

In Committee, the Minister said that that Act did not extend to immigration hearings. However, child asylum seekers may have to go to the High Court or the Appeal Court for judicial review of their asylum claims. That is unacceptable to all those involved in immigration cases, except the Minister. He still has time to change his mind, accept that the child's interests should be paramount and accept the Lords amendments.

The children's panel will provide as comprehensive a service as it can, even on the proposed non-statutory basis. It will certainly provide considerably more than what is available at present. It will be able to meet children as soon as they arrive and assist them in their search for legal advice and proper care until their families are found or their future lives properly planned.

Wendy Ayotte of the Children's Legal Centre said:

> "Unless the government accepts some responsibility, how can it expect local authorities to provide anything more than the most basic needs of children who need a great deal of special help?"

We are—if it needs to be stressed again—dealing with children with profound problems. Many of them are traumatised; many have lost parents or had a bloody separation from them in a foreign land. They are ill equipped to deal with the environment in which they find themselves.

We are all aware of the economic mess that the Government have created. However, for a very small amount of money a great deal of human misery could be alleviated if the Government do the job properly. We cannot any longer leave children solely dependent on local authorities for care. The Government must accept their share of what is an international responsibility. To date, Ministers have tended to leave us all in the dark. From the outset, they have not shown any support for the principle embodied in the Lords amendments, which makes us a little suspicious of their sudden conversion to a non-statutory scheme. In fact, their prevarication is one reason why the Bill has taken so long to come back before the House.

It is not sufficient to have a non-statutory scheme. In many cases the Government, through the Bill, have created the problems, so it is only right that they should support the solutions to those problems. I hope that they will support the Lords amendments and not opt for a non-statutory scheme. They should join Labour Members in supporting the proposals to aid those children—the most vulnerable individuals—as they seek asylum and refuge in our country.

Mr. Maclennan: This is the last appearance of the Bill before the House. It behoves us to recall that the substance of the Lords amendments were adumbrated a long time ago, even before the general election, when the previous Bill was before Parliament. It bears witness to the tenacity of purpose of a number of hon. Members on both sides of the House who have sought to ensure that the Government's Bill to tighten control over asylum seekers would not lead to a worsening of the administrative procedures for the handling of applications by children.

It is right to pay tribute to the work done in that respect before the Dissolution by Sir Philip Goodhart, then Conservative Member of Parliament for Beckenham who—along with many other Conservative Members—was quick to point out to the Government the need for special arrangements to ensure that the difficulties faced by children seeking to apply for asylum, which are certainly greater than those of adults, are taken into account by the Home Office.

The two amendments drafted and passed in another place reflect the consensus that was developing across the Committee that considered the Bill that it would be desirable to provide special representation for children, who are afflicted with difficulties in understanding procedures that, quite properly, must be operated quickly when children arrive in this country and seek asylum. I refer to their fear of officialdom, language problems, and the difficulty of not knowing who is speaking for them. It is fair to say that the Minister has understood those problems all along. The question is how best to resolve them.

It is proper to recognise the relatively limited scale of the administrative challenge posed by children seeking asylum. The problem has been greatly exaggerated—perhaps more so by the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), who introduced the original Bill, then even his successor. However, as the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) said, that was in a period when a general election was overhanging, and the right hon. Member for Mole Valley may have seen some advantage in whipping up concern.

In the event, the number of those seeking asylum in this country has proved to be far fewer than in other western European countries. Whereas events in Bosnia and eastern Europe in particular led to the Federal German Republic facing vastly increased numbers of asylum seekers—the figure runs into hundreds of thousands—the latest official figures available show that between last January and November, the United Kingdom admitted 23,390 asylum seekers, of whom a mere 129 were children. That reminds us that we are not dealing with a massive administrative problem, but that it would be unacceptable to sweep the matter aside because it affects relatively few people.

Mr. Allen: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not conclude his remarks without making some reference to his party's view on the comments made by the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill), particularly given the record of some of his colleagues in Liberal-controlled Tower Hamlets. It may be useful to have something on the record from the hon. Gentleman's party.

Mr. Maclennan: I am not one to rush into using consideration of detailed amendments concerning the rights of children to seek asylum to make a general statement about race relations and the comments of a Conservative Member. However, I wrote to the hon. Gentleman in question to express my views in no uncertain terms and I shall be happy to provide the hon. Member for Nottingham, North with a copy of that letter. I believe that the hon. Gentleman will find that my views are no less robust than his own. However, at this stage I prefer to confine my remarks to the subject of children seeking asylum.

As the Minister knows, I am particularly interested in that aspect and I take this opportunity to thank him for the way in which he undertook in Committee to consider the proposal for the statutory provision of a panel along the lines followed by Lord Brightman in another place.

I also thank him for the courteous and thoughtful way in which he listened to the arguments that I deployed when I went to see him with the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester). From what he said on that occasion and earlier this afternoon, I have no doubt that he has put his mind

It is unfortunate that we are legislating for asylum in this manner. At the very last gasp of the Bill, the Government have announced seven administrative steps to ameliorate consideration of the issues; seven ways in which local authorities are reminded of their responsibilities and given guidance on how to handle them; seven ways in which the immigration rules are amended to take account of the handling of children's applications; and seven ways in which the formal mechanisms for handling temporary admissions by local authorities are to be handled. That kind of administrative response should have preceded the legislation, rather than coming after it. If the amendments had been in place, tried out and seen to work, it is conceivable that much of what the Government are now doing would not be necessary and that the vast amount of parliamentary time taken up by the Bill would have been saved.

[Mr. Maclennan]

Many of the problems involved in the managing of asylum seekers are of an administrative nature. At best, the Government's motive in bringing this legislation was to deal with the problem of backlog. Many believe that, given resources, new administrative priorities and the guidelines which have finally been extracted in respect of children, it would have eliminated, or greatly reduced and contained, the problem of asylum seeking—and wrongful asylum seeking—being confined as it was.

We are at the beginning of a new Home Office regime and—I suspect—a long way away from the next general election. I hope that party political considerations will prompt the Government less in matters concerning race and immigration than they have in the past. At the beginning of this new Administration, may I urge the Minister, as I would have said to the Home Secretary if he were still here—I was glad to see him here at the beginning of the debate—to look before he leaps, not to be rushed into legislation where it is not strictly required and not to seek to change the law on immigration and race just for the sake of a cheap headline and of ensuring that the most atavistic instincts of certain sections of our community are fed by the Home Office? That is not the way to advance good race relations.

I wish the Home Secretary well in his new job and I am glad that he came to the House for the opening of this debate; I understand that Cabinet Ministers are not usually able to sit throughout entire debates. I have known the Home Secretary for many, many years—even in his pre-legislative life as a lawyer—and I know that he takes a genuine interest in many of the matters for which he will have high political responsibility.

The crucial issue that we will have to decide when we vote tonight is whether what the Government propose for the handling of children's applications is sufficient. The Minister knows that I have strongly argued that a statutory scheme would have benefits. First, it would make it clear that there was a duty to be discharged by members of the panel and would give such a panel a status that would assist the other bodies with statutory responsibilities for handling such matters. It is inevitable that the immigration authorities, immigration officers, local authorities and social workers will continue to handle these cases.

I never believed that the setting up of an advisory panel to assist the children by acting as advocates should diminish the responsibilities of local authority officers and immigration officers; but the establishment of panels of experts would recognise that no local authority—or very few—could conceivably have the necessary range of linguistic expertise, or background knowledge of the circumstances which led a child to flee from a foreign country.

4.45 pm

I think that the Government recognise that such expertise cannot exist within a local authority. Some local authorities may have acquired this expertise—for example, those within the environs of an airport. If they have, so much the better, but it is possible that most local authorities will not have acquired such expertise and will value the help of the panels which would be set up under the administrative arrangements that the Minister has proposed in place of the statutory arrangements approved in another place.

Only two issues of principle on the statutory scheme make it preferable. First, it gives some stability which, inevitably, an administrative scheme of the kind that the Minister has outlined cannot give. The Minister said that we should see how it works and then judge its effectiveness. It is right that we should do that. In time, it may come to seem so clearly a part of the system that the Minister may choose some other legislative opportunity to put it on a statutory basis. That sort of development is not unknown.

The second reason for ensuring that the scheme is on a statutory basis which still commends itself to me—and if the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) intends to press the matter to a Division, I shall support him—is the question of finance. If a statutory body is established, finance will be made available for it to discharge its statutory function. The Minister is right to say that he cannot give an undertaking about expenditure beyond the current year—we know that very well—but the best way in which to ensure that the necessary resources are forthcoming is to provide a statutory body which enjoys the backing of the full Government and which must therefore be funded. That seems to be a conclusive argument in favour of a statutory scheme.

I am grateful to the Refugee Council and the Children's Legal Centre for the helpful role that they have played throughout our debates. I have no doubt that they, particularly the Refugee Council, will be under financial pressure at some point as a result of the legislation. I hope, therefore, that their additional responsibilities will be reflected in additional funding.

I am glad that we have moved as far as we have down the road towards recognising the particular needs of children asylum seekers and that we are setting up a system of guidance, guardianship and advocacy, by administrative means, to take account of those needs. A modest change has been brought about by means of an immensely protracted debate, keenly fought in a number of different forums. That the battle has been at least partially won by those who are concerned about children asylum seekers is a cause for some satisfaction. If the Minister could bring himself to take that further step, I know that he would satisfy the whole House.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), whose sincerity in these matters is exceeded only by the length of his speeches, is naive if he believes for one moment that Conservative Members, particularly those who sit on the Treasury Bench, are motivated by anything other than party political considerations when they deal with asylum and immigration policy.

This squalid little Bill, the Lords amendments to which we are considering this afternoon, was born out of party political considerations. It is being considered at a time when party political considerations have precluded Conservative Members, particularly those who sit on the Treasury Bench and upon whom the responsibility lies, from condemning roundly the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) for the appalling speech that he made only a few days ago. That speech, which received so much publicity, was disreputable and it did neither the hon. Gentleman nor his party any credit. It has poisoned the atmosphere of race relations in this country.

When one looks at the climate into which the children with whom these amendments are concerned will be arriving and at the climate into which they will be required to go when they attend school and attempt to lead some semblance of a normal life, after the trauma that led to their flight to this country in the first place, one realises that that trauma can only be increased by the hon. Gentleman's speech.

It is a pity that the hon. Member for Davyhulme did not have the courtesy to be in his place this afternoon. He is only too well aware of the concern that hon. Members in all parts of the House feel about his utterances. He must be only too well aware of the fact that his speech will be referred to during the debate, Therefore, it is all the more reprehensible that he has not had the guts to come along and hear what is said.

Equally reprehensible is the Minister's silence. I know that he abhors, as strongly as any Opposition Member, the sentiments expressed by the hon. Member for Davyhulme. I do not for one moment call into question the Minister's sincerity and integrity in promoting good race relations. Therefore, I hope that he will come to the Dispatch Box soon and condemn his hon. Friend's speech. Both I and other Opposition Members—and, I know, Conservative Members—have been inundated with correspondence from constituents, particularly constituents from the Asian community who have been shocked, affronted and deeply hurt and wounded by the hon. Gentleman's speech and the Government's reticence in condemning it.

Mr. Madden: Although I agree entirely with what my hon. Friend has said, does he agree that the deafening silence of the Prime Minister, following the repugnant remarks of the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill), was deeply worrying? If the Prime Minister was truly shocked by what the hon. Gentleman said, would not a practical demonstration of that repugnance have been for the Conservative party to withdraw the Whip from the hon. Member for Davyhulme?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Before the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) continues his speech, may I remind him and the House that we are dealing with specific Lords amendments? This is neither the time nor the place to go into other matters. I am sure that there will be ample opportunities for those matters to be raised properly.

Mr. Boateng: I am sure that that is the case, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I look forward tomorrow afternoon at Prime Minister's Question Time to the Prime Minister taking the opportunity to denounce the hon. Member for Davyhulme—unless, of course, the Prime Minister is so preoccupied with his own parlous position that, once again, it slips his mind.

The amendments are welcome. I refer not only to the Lords amendments but to those that stand in the names of my hon. Friends on the Opposition Front Bench. They are welcome, because they highlight the plight of children and young people as refugees, and also the plight of those caught up in the crisis in Yugoslavia.

My constituency experience, however, is that of unaccompanied child refugees from Somalia and the Horn of Africa. The Minister knows, because there has been correspondence between myself and his Department, as well as with the Department of the Environment on the issue, that we have in our schools the highest ratio of children and young people from Somalia, whose very real needs have been met only as a result of considerable sacrifice and selflessness on the part of teachers, social workers and others in the London borough of Brent.

They have worked until now—it is still the case, although I am glad to hear that it will shortly be remedied —without any additional resources from central Government. It is therefore welcome that some resources, at any rate, are to be made available. One is anxious that they should come on tap as quickly as possible. We look forward to hearing from the Minister that this new money —and we want a guarantee that it will be new money—will be provided quickly and will be focused on the urgent needs of those young refugees.

The importance of the Lords amendment is that it seeks to put on a statutory basis that which the Government now say they are prepared to do, belatedly and under pressure, on a voluntary basis. It is important that it should be put on a statutory basis. It provides the clearest indication of the Government's commitment to this issue. It promises continuity and the stability of provision. It also ensures that the Government put their money where their mouth is. Without the provision of resources, it is difficult to believe that the Government's commitment will be worth the paper upon which it is written.

We are worried about how the voluntary scheme is to be established, and I hope that the Minister will be able to assist us. Will the Children's Legal Centre be fully involved and consulted? Will the British Refugee Council and other bodies working with children have additional resources to enable them better to do their job? What will be the mechanism for liaison between social services and those with specific responsibilities under the voluntary scheme?

5 pm

My borough is not alone in finding that, after 6 pm, the police are the social services because of the constraint on local authority budgets. Refugees arrive at all times of the day and night. Those of us who represent boroughs adjacent to the main ports of entry know that there can be calls on the local authority social services departments literally at any time. Before we accept the Government's assurances, we want to hear more about how the voluntary scheme will work in practice.

This country's commitment under international law and under article 3 of the United Nations convention on the rights of the child is clear. It is to ensure that the best interests of the child shall be the primary consideration and that in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative or legislative bodies, those best interests are given the primacy of consideration that is their due. What better way to ensure that than by statute? It is not for nothing that the House of Lords passed the amendment. It recognised that the only way to ensure that the child's interests are paramount is to give the notion statutory backing.

We have a specific responsibility to children and young people. They are the most vulnerable sector of the refugee community. Their young lives are all too often shaped, twisted and distorted in ways that we can barely begin to imagine by the horror of their experiences in the countries from which they flee and by the trauma of their journey. We must ensure that on their arrival on these shores—they will already have had to overcome enormous barriers to

get here—they find a genuine sanctuary and refuge and that, for a while at least, they have at their disposal someone with a statutory duty to relate to them as a friend.

It is not without significance that amendment No. 2 deals, which deals with the appointment of functions of the advisory panel, refers specifically to the notion of "befriending" a young person. I have never seen that word used in any statutory provision but, when we are talking about children who have undergone such experiences, it is right to ensure that they have a statutory right to have someone as their friend who will stand up for them against what can often be a hostile, oppressive and alien bureaucracy. It is right that the friend should have the backing of statute. When we give the House the opportunity to vote on the amendment, I hope that hon. Members will uphold it.

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green): It is always a great pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng). I wish to associate myself with his remarks about the great anxiety caused to his constituents by the comments of the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill). I know from my own experience in the past few days that the hon. Gentleman's remarks caused tremendous distress and anxiety to my constituents. The remarks were outrageous and reprehensible, and I am sad that the Secretary of State for the Home Department and the Prime Minister have not properly condemned them.

I was delighted when amendments 3 and 4 were made to the Bill in another place. Lord Brightman and Baroness Faithfull are to be congratulated on their hard work in building on our debates in Committee.

The benchmark of a civilised society is how we treat our children. An even greater standard is the way in which we treat other people's children, those who are fleeing traumatic and dangerous situations abroad. The provision of a statutory advisory panel, giving unaccompanied children who may have suffered bereavement, torture and travel to a country that they do not understand, access to an adult to advise and support them, would be progressive and humane.

It would help to implement the United Nations convention on the rights of the child, which emphasises that the child's best interests should be the primary consideration in any dealings that the state has with the child. The same principle is embodied in the Children Act 1989, which was so warmly welcomed by all parties. Therefore, given that the Government now appear to accept the principle and the difficulties that unaccompanied children face in such circumstances, it seems odd that they cannot put the provision on a statutory basis. If we have such statutory obligations to children, why not include this proposal in the Bill?

The advisory panel would provide support in dealing with local authority departments as well as immigration officials. It would certainly be in line with the well established practice in wardship cases of providing a guardian ad litem to young people.

The horrific experiences that befall refugees affect children as well as adults. We have recently seen many examples from the Bosnian conflict on our television screens. Amnesty International has documented some appalling cases in which children are, in their own right, victims of persecution and torture.

They are often threatened with torture and death by people who want to extract information from their parents. They may fear for their own lives because of civil war and attacks by repressive regimes. If parents are imprisoned, dead or missing, children must flee, helped by family and friends. Sometimes they must travel for long periods under hazardous conditions before reaching the United Kingdom.

Clearly, only exceptional circumstances would force children to undertake such dangerous and frightening journeys alone. What is the response when unaccompanied children manage to make that dangerous voyage? What faces them when they reach our country? When they come to Britain, they find that there is no special provision for them. Immigration officers, untrained in questioning children, interview them before deciding whether to grant them temporary admission. That interview is crucial to the determination of the child's case. If the child gets over that hurdle and is then given temporary admission, she or he is referred to a local authority which may not know anything about the child's refugee-related needs.

The British Refugee Council recently carried out a survey of the provision made by 17 local authorities, 16 of them London boroughs. It revealed that at least 25 children were held in detention by the immigration service on arrival and that 70 children had to wait up to three months before a local authority responded to their needs. At least 50 children were moved more than three times in their first three months in this country. That would be traumatic enough for any child, but for children who have encountered such dangers and who have had such experiences, how much more difficult and psychologically damaging must this trauma be?

Many children had no access to support from people of their own culture and language. It is not surprising that local authorities, however good their intentions, do not cope as well as they might with those children. Finding the necessary resources and expertise is yet another claim on overstretched budgets. Most individual authorities do not have the resources to sustain the breadth of expertise necessary to deal with the small number of children from a wide range of countries, cultures and languages. They need an advocate who would articulate their needs to ensure that they are met.

There are many examples of what happens to child refugees. The Refugee Council reported that a 15-year-old African refugee child formerly at a dedicated voluntary children's home was kept in Harmondsworth detention centre for a week following his arrival. He had no access to an interpreter for several days, and did not know where he was or why he was being kept there.

A boy of 15 from Zaire, who fled from civil war when his parents died, sought asylum at the port of entry. Immigration passed him on to the local authority social services department, which accommodated him overnight and referred him the next day to a refugee project as being a 16-year-old and therefore not in need. The project found him a place in a refugee hostel where he insisted—and he was believed—that he was 15. The local authority in the end acknowledged its wrong assessment and took him back. Those are just a couple of examples of the difficult situations that such children can face.

Like the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. MacLennan), I offer my thanks to the Children's

Legal Centre, Save the Children and the British Refugee Council for the good advice that we have received during the passage of the Bill.

What is the experience elsewhere? The experience of other European countries is instructive. The children's legal centre recently introduced a report entitled "Children or Refugees? A survey of west European policies on unaccompanied refugee children". It shows that, in France, each section of the body that determines refugee status has a person mandated to assess children's applications. In Belgium, children's applications are given priority; in Denmark, an assessor is nominated. In Sweden, the world leader in the treatment of children, immigration officers who conduct asylum interviews have received special training in interviewing children.

I noted the Minister's opening remarks about some of the administrative changes that he now proposes to introduce. I welcome them. They are long overdue, and it is a shame that we had to wait until the other place debated the issue and introduced the new clauses before the Minister proposed the changes.

If the Minister has such confidence in the proposals, and if they meet with the approval of all parties, why not write them on the face of the Bill? If that is not done, the suspicion must be that they will be temporary and that, when the year runs out or when there are funding difficulties, they will disappear. Can we have some directness on the matter? We press the Minister further about his intentions.

We are not talking about a great number of children. In 1992, 185 unaccompanied child asylum seekers applied for asylum at their point of entry. The provision is necessary for a small number of children in exceptional circumstances, such as those in 1990 during the fighting in Eritrea. The panel of advocates would have only a small cost implication, and the value to the children would far outweigh any cost.

Article 20 of the United Nations convention on the rights of the child provides:

"a child temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment, or in whose own best interests cannot be allowed to remain in that environment, shall be entitled to special protection and assistance provided by the state".

After all those children have been through, they surely deserve no less.

5.15 pm

Mr. Corbyn: I was a member of the Committees on both the Asylum Bill and the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill. We twice tried to introduce the amendment that was subsequently carried in the Lords. It is before us today, and the Government are trying to wriggle out of it.

Mr. Charles Wardle *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Corbyn: The Minister indicates that he is not trying to wriggle out of it. If he is not, I am not entirely certain what his speech was about. Was he not trying to wriggle out of a statutory requirement to look after unaccompanied children when they seek asylum in this country?

The whole principle behind the demands that we made in both Committees was that unaccompanied children deserve special treatment, because they are refugees, because they are unaccompanied, because they are arriving in this country and because they are in danger of falling through all the various nets that are supposed to be constructed to defend children in such a vulnerable situation.

It is not so long ago that a number of unaccompanied children arrived in London at the airport, left the airport, having been admitted to the country—nobody gave a thought to what was going to happen to them once they walked through the immigration channels at Heathrow—and, somehow or other, landed up on church steps in my constituency. To the credit of the priests at the church, they immediately took the children in, fed them, clothed them, housed them and looked after them.

Subsequently my local authority took responsibility for them. It did not say, "We cannot afford it. We will not do it. These are unaccompanied children who deserve our help and understanding." They were most terribly distressed children, who did not know why they had left their own country, did not understand what had happened there and did not understand a word of English. It was only with great difficulty that interpreters were found to help them. I pay tribute to all those voluntary agencies that helped.

The point that those agencies made to me time after time was that those children deserved better than the good fortune of landing on the right church steps, at the right place and at the right time, with a good samaritan helping them out. When the lesson from that is learned, it must be that there has to be a legally appointed guardian from the point of arrival to look after those children. What do the Government say? "No, we do not need anything like that; we do not need any statutory requirement whatever".

In Committee on the first Bill, the Minister's predecessor went as far as to question why the children were unaccompanied in the first place. I will tell him and the House why. When people are living in extreme danger—in a state of war, where they might be killed for their political, social or religious beliefs—the first consideration is the safety of their children.

Jewish families in Germany sent their children into exile in the 1930s. They did not know what would happen to their children, but they felt that there was better hope for them outside Nazi Germany than inside it. Many of the children sent into exile were looked after, but, tragically, many more were not and died as a result.

Tragically, children all around the world face situations similar to those faced by children in Nazi Germany. We should do better than to weasel our way out—as the Minister seeks to do—of a proposal that has been agreed by all the agencies and all those who have some understanding and experience, and return to some kind of voluntary scheme.

The reason we are going for a non-statutory, voluntary scheme is that the Government are not prepared to pay the cost of the statutory scheme in the long run. The Government know that there may well be considerable numbers of unaccompanied children arriving in this country in the future. The Government know that, I know that, and everyone who looks at the horrors that exist in so many parts of the world knows that.

Is the solution to close the doors on everyone seeking asylum, or is it to go for an humanitarian system of assisting unaccompanied children and giving them a place of safety and a safe haven in this country? It is to be hoped that those children can be reunited with their parents who may be able to come to this country at a later stage.

[Mr. Corbyn]

With all that is going on around the world, I would have thought that the Minister could have shown today that he does not agree with what the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) said. The Minister could have stood up against the vile, xenophobic and racist nonsense spoken by the hon. Gentleman, and show a spark of humanity in respect of unaccompanied child refugees.

I believe strongly in the issue. We debated it many times in Committee. I do not doubt that the payroll vote will be wheeled out in a few minutes' time and the Lords amendments will be defeated, and we will return to some kind of voluntary scheme. That is not satisfactory, and we shall return to the question of guaranteeing real support, real friendship and real protection for victims of the most appalling brutality and terror that exists around the world today.

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): In obedience to your ruling, Madam Deputy Speaker, I will not say much about the speech made by the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill), except to say that the debate is being conducted at a time when xenophobia has found a voice in many parts of Europe. It is most important that we should make it absolutely clear that we will take no part in the speaking of that language.

I want to feel that I live in a country where children who have been persecuted, who have seen their parents tortured and who have little hope in their own country receive a welcome. We should write into statute services that those children will most definitely need.

Reference has been made to several laws and conventions that would advance and enhance the position of such children—the 1951 United Nations convention, the 1967 protocol relating to the status of refugees, and article 22 of the United Nations convention on the rights of the child, so recently ratified by the United Kingdom, which states:

"Refugee children should receive protection and humanitarian assistance in enjoying their rights under this convention."

Our own Children Act 1990 states that the interest of children must be paramount. Does that apply only to our own children? Should not the interests of children from other countries also be paramount? In making what is, I suppose, a concession to the tremendous force of the arguments used in the other place, the Minister is making a nod in the direction of that concept, without having the courage to write such a provision into statute.

When I was Front-Bench spokesman with responsibility for children, I went to Hillingdon and talked to people dealing with refugees coming in. I have met child refugees from all parts of the world. I have always been amazed and appalled that, when it comes to child refugees, other European countries can get it right but we cannot. Other European countries have made enormous strides in establishing proper procedures for dealing with child refugees. We are once again bottom of the league, while other countries have statutory procedures giving children an advocate and a friend to whom they can refer for advice.

I do not know whether the Minister has met many child refugees. Does he know what they have been through and what they have suffered? Does he know of their great fear of coming to a country where they do not know the language? Many of them do not know what has happened to their parents, although they know that they may well be dead or that they are persecuted. Many parents put their children on a plane with someone merely to get them out of the country. Faced with the situation with which those parents are faced, we would all make such arrangements.

Such children have suffered enormously. They are traumatised and they need all the help that we can give them. But faced with those circumstances, what do we do? Immigration officers have the first bite. They are not trained to deal with child refugees. They have never received any training to help them to cope with children, but they decide whether children can be admitted and considered as applicants for asylum. I do not know how many children have been refused entry to this country.

When we do allow children in, we fingerprint them and treat them as criminals. When we have asked what is the justification for fingerprinting adult asylum seekers and seekers of refugee status, we have been told, "Fraudulent claims have been made for social security benefits." It is all in the Lords *Hansard*. But that does not apply to children. Before the last election, I asked specific questions about the number of child refugees who had been found guilty of fraud in relation to social security benefits. I was told that the answer was none. That being so, what is the rationale for fingerprinting children?

It is terribly frightening for a child to be fingerprinted. In most of the countries from which the children have come, fingerprinting is the prelude to torture and detention. Why do we have to fingerprint children? What is all that about? Surely we can look at that again.

As a civilised country, we ought to enshrine in statute certain services as of right. It would enhance the reputation of the Government, and of the Minister in particular, if the hon. Gentleman accepted the force of the arguments that were used in the other place, which were advanced from both sides of the House. For example, Baroness Faithfull, who is experienced in all questions of social work and who chairs the children's panel that many of us attend, made a moving speech in which she repeatedly drew attention to the bewilderment that child asylum seekers feel. We want to offer them some sort of security.

I read in today's edition of the *Evening Standard* that Somalian gunmen who attacked Pakistani troops used women and children as human shields to prevent the troops who were guarding a United Nations peacekeeping force at a feeding centre in Mogadishu from doing their job. Just imagine what children from such troubled parts of the world who end up here have been through.

There are not many of us left in the House who were evacuees within this country—and some went abroad—during the last war. We went only a few miles out of London and away from our homes—to escape the bombing and because our parents feared that this country would be invaded and wanted to make sure that we were safe.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): My hon. Friend is well known for her interest in children, and I had the honour to work with her for a while. Let me reinforce what she says about the trauma that such children undergo. Last week, I was in Azerbaijan and visited a number of refugee camps in which there were a considerable number of children. Those refugees are Azeris in Azerbaijan; they are in their own country and are being protected; they are not

starving. Yet the trauma among them is most evident. It must be a hundred times worse for a child to be a refugee in a strange country. I can verify absolutely from my own experience what my hon. Friend has said.

Miss Lestor: My hon. Friend has made my point for me. I was about to say that, as evacuees, we were in our own country and spoke the same language, albeit, perhaps, in different dialects. We knew a little of what was happening. We knew that our parents were alive, although we thought that they might be killed. The trauma will stay with those of us experienced evacuation as very small children for the rest of our lives. It was a terrifying experience. Imagine how much worse it is for children who come to a strange country whose language they do not speak, when they know that their parents are dead or are being tortured.

We are a civilised nation and are not poor—despite all the Government's efforts to make us into a poor country—yet we apparently cannot find the money to establish a statutory advice service for those children so that they can be assured of some service and can have some guarantee of protection.

Mr. Charles Wardle: When the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) refers to fingerprinting, I hope that she appreciates that many child asylum seekers, like other asylum seekers, apply for asylum without any means of identification. They have no documents. First and foremost, the process of fingerprinting is meant to establish an unshakeable identification. I respect the hon. Lady's work with children, and I entirely understand what she and other hon. Members have said in this debate about the traumatised state of many children who apply for asylum. However, as I explained earlier, we already have the provisions of the Children Act 1989.

5.30 pm

The hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) said that no account was taken of children in immigration law. However, he misses the point. Immigration law and the Geneva convention on refugees do not distinguish between applicants on the basis of age. So far as immigration is concerned, the same considerations apply. In all other respects with regard to children, the Children Act 1989 covers the welfare responsibilities as I have explained.

The hon. Member for Nottingham, North began in his usual churlish fashion with some less than welcoming remarks about my right hon. and learned Friend the new Home Secretary. To begin with, he found it a little difficult to remain in order in terms of this debate.

I want to respond to some of the remarks made about my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill). Those remarks, so far as I can see, have little to do with the Lords amendments that we are considering. If hon. Members listened to the radio or watched television last week, I hope that they will be aware of what my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and I had to say about the matter.

I made it absolutely clear then, and repeat now, that I deplore any remarks which give rise to ethnic tensions. I took issue in the media last week with my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme on two counts. The first was his assessment of the size and proportion of the ethnic population as a proportion of the entire population, and the second was his remarks about primary immigration. Primary immigration ended years ago in this country. I will not enlarge upon that, because, if I did, Madam Deputy Speaker, you would rule that I was straying out of order.

A constructive and healthy debate about immigration should be conducted regularly in the media and in this House.

Mr. Allen: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wardle: No, I will not expand upon that.

The hon. Member for Nottingham, North also referred to Bosnia. Again, he was straying a little out of order. He referred to the 1,000 ex-detainees and their dependants. He knows full well that the Government depend on the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Red Cross for the number of people who have arrived so far.

In an intervention, the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden)—I do not like to think of a debate of this kind in which the hon. Member for Bradford, West does not intervene—referred to family reunion.

I should make it absolutely clear, and I hope not to stray too far out of order as this point related to children, that, in respect of the 1,000 Bosnian ex-detainees, some of whom have already arrived, and their dependants, reunion with their families is being carried out simultaneously where that is possible. For those ex-detainees who arrive outside the normal immigration rules and where someone is granted asylum refugee status, family reunion can follow straight away. Where someone is granted exceptional leave to remain, there is a four-year waiting period. If I were to dwell on that point, no doubt you would rule me out of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Madden: For the accuracy of the record, will the Minister confirm what he told me in his letter that I received today: that, to date, only 235 ex-detainees and only 387 dependants have been received in the United Kingdom? We are a very long way from the figure of 4,000 announced by the former Home Secretary last November.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have allowed a certain latitude, but I am not prepared to allow any more. The Minister, just like any other hon. Member, must now consider the amendments.

Mr. Wardle: I shall do that, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I welcome the advice offered by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) in Committee and subsequently in the discussions that he and I had with my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) about a children's advisory panel. I know of the hon. Gentleman's enthusiasm about the subject, and I am grateful for his good wishes to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

However, perhaps the only difference on the matter between the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland and me is whether there should be statutory responsibility for the panel. For the reasons that I made as clear as possible, it would be confusing to have statutory responsibility, because there are already clear-cut statutory responsibilities laid on local authority social services departments in that area.

The practical administrative measure which will deliver precisely the same service as the friend and adviser which the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland has

[Mr. Wardle]

advocated throughout, and which Lord Brightman has advocated, will be delivered by the arrangements which are now in place.

Mr. Corbyn: If there is a clear statutory responsibility on local authority social services departments in respect of unaccompanied children, what is the Minister's Department prepared to do to reimburse them for the considerable costs of looking after deeply traumatised children for many years? Such children require a great deal of support, help and counselling.

Mr. Wardle: The hon. Gentleman is aware that I alluded to that earlier. Precisely how the extra funds announced by the Home Secretary on 3 February will be distributed is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

The hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) volunteered that there were party political considerations afoot. I fear that he has not had an opportunity to read our debates in Committee, where he will have learnt of administrative measures designed to improve the service that is being offered. That is of fundamental importance.

I seem to recall that the hon. Member for Brent, South spoke briefly on Second Reading and asked about legal aid and funding for such advice. He also asked about the arrangements to which I referred earlier. He was concerned for the way in which the Refugee Council and others might operate.

As I said earlier, that is a matter for the Refugee Council which will organise and administer the scheme itself. It has specific Home Office funding for that purpose. The Refugee Council is well placed to work with other voluntary organisations which are active in the area. However, it will be for the Refugee Council to decide whom to consult and when.

Mr. Neil Gerrard (Walthamstow): Will the Minister confirm that, although the Refugee Council has agreed to carry out that work, its stated preference was for a statutory agency?

Mr. Wardle: Mr. Dubs of the Refugee Council has made that point clear. As the House will be aware, I disagree with that point of view. I am sure that we will find that the Refugee Council will go to work with a will and will make the new panel of advisors work very well. We will be discussing with the Department of Health how best to draw the attention of local authorities to the new arrangements—probably through an addition to the new guidance that I mentioned earlier, which is in preparation.

The hon. Members for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) and for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) outlined a number of case histories and described arrangements that were in place in other countries. I think that their suspicions are overdone. We are dealing with the treatment of child asylum seekers. This is not a matter of asylum procedures as such. It relates to the treatment of those children. I am absolutely confident that the new administrative measures in place—the new funding for the scheme that will be run by the Refugee Council—will serve the cause of child asylum seekers in this country suitably and well.

For those reasons, I urge the House to reject the amendments.

Question put, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 274, Noes 226.

Division No. 286] **[5.40 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Killedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark

Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heppell, John
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Killoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Roche, Mrs. Barbara

Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'k'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Spellar and
Mr. Jon Owen Jones.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Lords amendment No. 2 disagreed to.

Clause 3

FINGERPRINTING

Lords amendment: No. 3, in page 1, line 21, leave out ("an "authorised person", that is to say").

Mr. Charles Wardle: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss also Lords amendments Nos. 4 and 5.

Mr. Wardle: The amendments to clause 3(2) are intended to make it clear that a child under 16 should be fingerprinted only in the presence of a person who is independent of the immigration authorities or the police and whose role it is to look after the interests of the child. The amendments provide for that individual to be the child's parent or guardian or a person who, for the time being, takes responsibility for that child. That would cover, for example, a local authority social worker, the child's legal representative, a relation other than a parent or guardian or a worker with a voluntary agency. The amendments make it clear that that person cannot be an immigration officer, another member of the Home Office or a police or prison officer.

I believe that the amendments meet the principal concern expressed in Committee in both Houses that the adult present should be seen to be independent of the authorities and responsible for looking after the child's interests.

Mr. Watson: The clause that provides for the fingerprinting of asylum seekers is one of the most objectionable in what Opposition Members consider to be a squalid Bill. It remains squalid despite the amendments that have been made in another place. It was of some consolation, but not much, that the clause was amended in two respects during its consideration in another place.

I was interested to note the clarification that the Minister offered about who might act as the adviser or friend to children who are asylum seekers. Although the Opposition welcome that clarification and the modest improvements that the amendments have made to the Bill, we do so not in the belief that they make the Bill acceptable, but that they represent the fulfilment of the commitments argued for and given by the Minister in Committee. For that reason, we will not oppose the amendments, but that should not be taken as signifying that we are satisfied with the content of the clause. That is far from the truth.

Throughout the Bill's progress, the Opposition's objections have centred on the fact that the very act of being fingerprinted criminalises asylum seekers. We have consistently argued in Committee, and in the House today, against that practice.

It is a long-established principle, certainly in Britain, that the only people who can be required to have their fingerprints taken are those who have been charged with a criminal offence. When people hear that someone is to be fingerprinted, it is certainly their perception that that person has committed a criminal offence. The fingerprinting of asylum seekers is objectionable not only for adults, but for children. That is why we have consistently argued strongly for the protection that is offered under the amendments.

I am not aware that even the Government have suggested that an application for asylum should be regarded as a criminal offence. The much maligned—and rightly so—hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) would be happy to argue for that, however, should the Government decide to change their policy.

I am not seeking to make cheap points about the recent comments of that rather dishonourable Member. At this stage, he is an easy target, but we are entitled to know where he is today. Why has he failed to attend this debate so that he can discuss an issue that is, apparently, of great importance to him? If the matter is really so important to the hon. Gentleman, why is he not present? We must question his motives—he must have made the speech for his own gain. I tend to be a regular participant in such debates and I have not seen the hon. Gentleman participating, which makes his remarks all the more reprehensible.

6 pm

In Committee, my hon. Friends and I failed to convince the Under-Secretary of my objections to criminalising those who are fingerprinted, including children. Legislation already exists—sections 27 and 61 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and schedule 2 to the Immigration Act 1971—to deal with cases in which it is believed that an asylum seeker may have committed a criminal offence. I am aware that we have covered that ground before, but it is important because all the arguments that we have advanced about the effect on adults of compulsory fingerprinting are multiplied several times in respect of children.

To fingerprint all asylum seekers, including children, makes an assumption of guilt. It assumes that everyone arrives at our shores with an ulterior motive—travelling under an alias, intent on making a bogus application and fraudulently claiming benefit. The underlying assumption is that no one is to be trusted and that, until they can prove their innocence, all asylum seekers are to be assumed guilty, at least in theory. Such a policy stands on its head what we have come to know as British justice—that one is innocent until proved guilty.

The Government have singularly failed to establish a convincing case for the need for blanket fingerprinting. We threw numbers at them in Committee and the Under-Secretary gave me some illuminating figures. He

said that the total number of cases being investigated then —November last year—was 1,600; 11 had led to convictions, 16 were being prosecuted and 170 suspected multi-applicants had been served with illegal entry papers. Those figures are small, and become comparatively smaller when placed against the total number of 24,000 asylum applications received in this country last year. The Government cannot use the scale of the problem to substantiate their argument for the need for blanket fingerprinting. If that is true in general, it is even more valid in terms of children.

Members of the Committee were given much information by a number of organisations which serviced us effectively. One of the most illuminating pieces of information came from the Children's Society. It recently produced a document called "Nowhere to Go", which quotes from interviews with families from Somalia and Eritrea who have sought asylum in this country. I shall read out one moving comment made by the asylum seekers. I shall quote verbatim, which will account for the grammar.

In a description of the experience of being fingerprinted on arrival and its effects, the interviewees said:

"This is very disgraceful. Back home if you are a criminal then you put your fingerprint. But asylum seekers when we put our fingerprints on the paper and explain to the children we are putting the fingerprint. After some time when there is a picture on the television it is going to give the impression to the children . . . 'My Mum she is wrong or my family are wrong. What did they do? It is something wrong'. So it's going to affect in terms of the mentality of the children. Because it shows on the television that if you do a crime you put your fingerprint and the children because of lack of knowledge of asylum seekers, they will think 'My father or my mum they are thieves'."

Those are the comments of people who have arrived in this country within the past year. I could give many more examples, but I do not have time to do so. The example that I have given underlines the way in which the people involved feel criminalised. Whether or not the Under-Secretary and his colleagues believe that the policy has a criminalising effect, those who are subjected to it, including children, believe that it does.

The way that fingerprinting affects children is the most serious aspect of the issue. It is a step further than the previous Bill on asylum was prepared to go, and it is certainly a step too far. In Committee, we charged the Under-Secretary with advocating a policy that would place the Government and the country in contravention of the United Nations convention on the rights of the child.

Article 37(a) states that no child shall be subjected to "cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment."

If children are subjected to forced fingerprinting when they have just arrived in a strange country, probably do not speak the language and have suffered the traumas of which we heard in detail earlier, that certainly amounts to degrading treatment. It might also be termed cruel and/or inhuman treatment depending on the state in which the child arrived in Britain—that would be determined according to the individual circumstances. The policy would contravene that convention, to which the Government, on behalf of the people of this country, are a signatory. They have a duty to uphold all its articles.

The right of a child to be accompanied while being fingerprinted is important, which is why we argued for it. But why should that provision be limited to children under 16? The answer is not clear, particularly as elsewhere, such as in clause 5(5)(a), the Bill refers to children as those under 18. I hope that the Under-Secretary will explain why 16 should be the age to apply to fingerprinting but 18 should be the age in relation to housing and other matters. It is not clear why that anomaly exists—it may be a drafting error, or there may be specific reasons. I am sure that the Under-Secretary will enlighten us.

It is not clear why any limits are set. In Committee, the Under-Secretary argued and, in another place, Earl Ferrers said on behalf of the Government that one reason why they were not prepared to accept any Opposition amendments about setting an age limit of 16, 14, 12, 10 or whatever was that one could never be sure of a child's age. If that is so—I do not accept that it is—why set an age limit of 16 for fingerprinting and an age limit of 18 for housing and other matters? If there are insuperable difficulties in ascertaining a person's age, we should be consistent and not set an age limit. I do not believe that it is impossible to ascertain someone's age, but my hon. Friends and I believe that fingerprinting people under the age of 18 is inappropriate and could be regarded as degrading and inhumane.

Section 50 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 states that a child under 10 cannot be presumed guilty of any offence, so no proceedings can be brought. The Police and Criminal Evidence Act lays down rules for fingerprinting children. Therefore, there are double standards on both counts—children under 10 cannot be charged with any criminal offence, yet, under the fingerprinting provisions, they are to be treated as if they were criminals. There are certain rules in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act and different ones in the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill.

Double standards are always unacceptable. To introduce double standards—one for British citizens and one for citizens of other countries—is entirely unacceptable and inimical to the legislation that we should pass. The distinction is unacceptable under any circumstances and one of which the Government should be ashamed. Were it possible to shame or embarrass the Government into changing direction, that would have happened long ago, in respect of other legislation, not just the Bill.

I feel that the efforts that I and others of my hon. Friends, especially my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) have made during the Bill's passage have highlighted to the Government the Bill's shortcomings and its pernicious nature. Its insidious denial of human rights and its inevitable criminalising effect on adults and children are not offset by the inclusion of the amendments.

The Bill has been opposed root and branch from start to finish. It has consistently been seen by Opposition Members as seeking simply to restrict the number of people coming into this country without any understanding of the position in which they find themselves. We have opposed it, and it does the Government no credit. Our opposition to the Bill as a whole is in no way reduced by the fact that we welcome the amendments.

Mr. Maclennan: The hon. Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson) has eloquently described the background to the amendments. I simply wish to make it clear on behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends that we regard the Government's modest concession—that children's fingerprints should be compulsorily taken only in the presence of their parents, guardians or those responsible for them when they are interviewed by

[Mr. Maclennan]

immigration officials—as an improvement. It is certainly unsatisfactory that it has taken so long to extract such a modest improvement to the Bill from the Government. I greatly regretted the fact that the Minister earlier appeared, rather insensitively, to regard compulsory fingerprinting of children as no more horrifying than when they are fingerprinted in a pleasure park at their own instigation. The two are quite different, as I am sure he will, on reflection, agree.

This is a modestly humanising measure. The amendments reflect the fallback position that we advocated in Committee. Many of us felt that it was wrong to fingerprint children under a certain age; but, as the Government are determined to persist, I believe that the amendments will help to remove some of the more frightening aspects of this physically intrusive compulsory fingerprinting of children.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 4 and 5 agreed to.

Clause 9

APPEALS FROM IMMIGRATION APPEAL TRIBUNAL

Lords amendment: No. 6, in page 7, line 21, at end insert:

("( ) In section 33(4) of the 1971 Act—

(a) for the words "in the case of an appeal to an adjudicator, the" there shall be substituted "an"; and

(b) after the words "section 20" there shall be inserted "or section 9 of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993".").

Mr. Charles Wardle: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following: Lords amendment No. 7, Lords amendment No. 8 and amendment (a) to the Lords amendment, and Lords amendments Nos. 9 and 15.

Mr. Wardle: This group of amendments extends the new avenue of appeal created by clause 9 from asylum cases only to all final determinations by the immigration appeal tribunal. That should be generally welcomed. It means that the opportunities to seek leave to appeal on a point of law to the relevant court will be available in both asylum and other immigration cases. I should perhaps confirm that nothing in the clause removes the availability of judicial review.

It may be helpful if I briefly explain the effect of the various amendments. Amendments Nos. 6 and 7 amend subsection (1), which creates the new avenue of appeal and removes the limitation to appeals in asylum cases. Amendment No. 8 specifies the appropriate court to deal with these cases. If the appeal was originally heard by an adjudicator in Scotland, the appropriate appeal court will be the Court of Session. In all other cases it will be the Court of Appeal.

Amendment No. 9 amends the 1971 Act so as to provide that an appeal shall continue to be treated as pending while an appeal may be or is being brought under this new provision. That will protect appellants from being required to leave the United Kingdom during that stage of the process.

As for amendment (a) to Lords amendment No. 8, the appeal system that the Bill provides for asylum seekers and the appeal system which already exists under the 1971 Act for other immigration appeals already provide a two-stage appeal—first, to an adjudicator, then to the tribunal. The Bill adds a further right of appeal, with leave on a point of law, to the Court of Appeal. Lords amendment No. 8 extends that to all immigration appeals, not just asylum cases.

Amendment (a) seeks to add one more layer to the process, by having the appeal from the determination of the tribunal go to the High Court. Cases that involve important points of law would no doubt go from there to the Court of Appeal, so we would have a four-tier system of appeals. The aim of the Bill is to provide an effective way of resolving disputed points of law arising from immigration and asylum appeals without needing to resort to judicial review. It is not a mechanism for drawing out the appeals process as long as possible. The view of the Lord Chancellor is that it is better to allow the appeal to go direct to the Court of Appeal and so to keep delays to a minimum.

There is nothing new in providing an avenue of appeal direct from a tribunal to the Court of Appeal. In general, when a tribunal hears appeals from another body, as the immigration appeal tribunal does, the avenue of appeal is to the Court of Appeal. Examples of such tribunals are the social security commissioners, the employment appeal tribunal and the lands tribunal. An appeal usually lies to the High Court when the tribunal takes decisions at first instance.

Amendment (b) seems to be based on the belief that the purpose of providing the new avenue of appeal is to deprive people of the chance of judicial review; not so. It is true that until now the only way of challenging a decision of the tribunal has been by way of judicial review and that it will now be open to dissatisfied appellants to seek to challenge disputed points of law by the more appropriate remedy of an application for leave to appeal to the relevant court.

To the extent that that remedy is available, the use of judicial review to challenge tribunal determinations is likely to decrease; but when a person seeks judicial review, it is entirely up to the judges to decide whether there is an issue that comes within their jurisdiction or merits leave to move for judicial review. Nothing in the Bill removes the availability of judicial review, nor is that the Government's intention.

Lords amendment No. 15 is an amendment to the long title of the Bill designed to reflect the amendments that have been made during the passage of the Bill. In its original form the long title states that the Bill restricts certain rights of appeal under the 1971 Act. We are now also extending the new avenue of appeal to the Court of Appeal to all determinations by the tribunal under the 1971 Act, and the new wording more accurately reflects the contents of the Bill.

6.15 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): I am grateful to the Minister for telling us something about the amendments, and especially about judicial review. These amendments were slipped into the Bill late and with virtually no debate in another place. We therefore did not have the benefit of a detailed explanation.

Our fear is that the amendments are more far-reaching and fundamental than their description in the other place would suggest—they were described as simply an extension of the right of appeal. Our fear remains that the facility of judicial review may in practice be limited by the amendments—in short, that there is a hidden agenda.

When the Bill left the Commons it included an appeal direct to the Court of Appeal in special ajudicator cases—that is to say, cases involving asylum. All other matters were still subject to review and appeal by way of judicial review. We were not happy with the Bill when it left here because we thought that the Court of Appeal pitched the process at the wrong level: it made appeals more extensive and complicated and it meant that cases were sent to a court that is already overworked and short of judges.

In another place and without debate, the arrangement intended for asylum cases was extended to cover all appeals, involving business people, wives, dependants, students and so on. The amendment, which look innocuous enough, may disguise a hidden agenda and reduce the possibilities of judicial review.

The divisional court applies two principles, among others, when it considers giving leave for judicial review. The first concerns whether an application is made within three months of the decision in question. Secondly, the divisional court tends to consider whether there is an existing right of appeal. It tends to refuse leave for judicial review when another avenue is open to someone—for instance, when a case comes before an adjudicator and there is a possibility of appealing to the immigration appeal tribunal, or when an immigration officer has made a decision and there is an appeal to an adjudicator.

In such cases, the divisional court tends to say that the matter is not appropriate for judicial review because other avenues are open. Even if the Government do not intend it, we are concerned that the effect of the amendments may be to cut out these avenues. Hence, to deal with a question of administrative law or impropriety, someone will have to canvass the issues before an adjudicator or the immigration appeal tribunal, but will be able to question them only when they get to the Court of Appeal.

I do not want to prolong the debate, but I have one question for the Minister which I shall preface with a preamble. The Bill incorporates the United Nations convention on the status of refugees, and the Government are a signatory to the European convention on human rights. In a new development, the European convention is expressly recited and adhered to in the Maastricht treaty, which the Government shortly propose to sign. My question is important whether appeals go to the Court of Appeal or to judicial review. Do the Government intend our courts to take direct cognisance of the European convention on human rights in deciding the validity of immigration rules, immigration appeal rules and the procedures before immigration appeal authorities?

Secondly, are the Government prepared to have ministerial decisions tested against the human rights criteria? The Government signed the human rights convention and are about to sign another treaty which expressly incorporates the European convention on human rights. Are they prepared to allow our domestic courts, whether the Court of Appeal or a judicial review body, to test what Ministers do and to test immigration rules and appeal rules against those criteria? If they are prepared to do that, how can the convention be applied if, in practice, judicial review is excluded because of the other appeal rights?

If the Minister is absolutely satisfied that there will be no interference whatever in the capacity to opt for judicial review at any stage of the proceedings, I shall be happy to agree to the amendments. However, if there is any risk in practice, whether or not it is a matter of law, or judicial review being curtailed, we would feel unhappy about the amendments.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I assure the hon. Gentleman that there is no hidden agenda. The fact that the European convention on human rights is mentioned in the Maastricht treaty will have no relevance to decisions by British courts on the matters that the hon. Gentleman outlined.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 7, 8, 9 and 15 agreed to.

Clause 10

VISITORS, SHORT-TERM AND PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS AND THEIR DEPENDANTS

Lords amendment: No. 10, in page 7, line 35, at end insert;

("(3AA) The Secretary of State shall appoint a person, not being an officer of his, to monitor, in such manner as the Secretary of State may determine, refusals of entry clearance in cases where there is, by virtue of subsection (3A) above, no right of appeal; and the person so appointed shall make an annual report on the discharge of his functions to the Secretary of State who shall lay a copy of it before each House of Parliament.").—*[Mr. Charles Wardle.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Allen: I beg to move amendment (a) to the Lords amendment, leave out from "appoint" to "monitor" in line 3 and insert,

"the Commission for Racial Equality (hereinafter referred to as "the Commission")".

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient also to discuss amendments (b) to (g) to the Lords amendment, plus Government amendment (j) to the Lords amendment, and Lords amendment No. 11.

Mr. Allen: The Conservatives are in a terrible mess and that would normally give some pleasure to the Opposition. However, when the Conservatives make a mess they are not the people who suffer, but people outside. When they are incompetent on the economy, my constituents lose jobs or businesses, and when the Government stupidly introduce a daft experiment to pay pensions into bank accounts, it is pensioners who become isolated while postmasters go bust.

When the Home Secretary needed to impress his Back Benchers, he bolted an anti-immigration clause on to what is essentially an asylum Bill. The relatives and friends of black and Asian British people will thus find that, virtually alone in our legal system, they will be denied the right to appeal against the wrongful denial of a visitor's visa. Last year, 3,845 such wrongful decisions were overturned because people had the right to appeal. That is the only reason for those decisions being changed. It was not because of any magnanimity by the Minister or the Home Secretary. The right of appeal has been abolished, and if those 3,845 people are wrongfully denied right of access to

[Mr. Allen]

this country, they will have no redress. By abolishing the right of appeal the Government are acquiescing to the continuation of wrongful decisions.

The Government need to play to several audiences and the amendments and proceedings in the Lords and elsewhere are an elaborate pantomime to try to convince the ethnic minority British that the proposals to abolish the right of appeal will not hurt them. A package of transparent concessions was offered in Committee, but it was laughed out of court. It was tragic and almost amusing to watch the Minister as he pretended to be dragged into making concessions to his Back Benchers, most of whom spent their time in Committee studying their correspondence and other papers. Suddenly they sprang to life to gain marvellous concessions which nobody believes have any substance.

Having failed to carry the day with those, the Government are now offering monitoring in place of a right of appeal. But not each case or each refusal of a visa will be monitored, nor can monitoring be initiated by someone who has been denied a visa. A minute and random sample will be monitored, the exercise will be unknown to the applicant and there will be no possible redress for errors. I hope that no one in any minority community in Great Britain will be gullible enough to be bought off by such flimsy and obvious manoeuvring. When the Tory begging bowl is passed around in the Asian business community, I hope that it will be greeted with the question, "How did you vote about the right of appeal being abolished for visitors?"

The Government have attempted to wangle their way out of the problem by promoting what they would term a friendly amendment in the Lords. It is worth considering why the amendment was proposed. The Government argued that there is an overwhelming need to end the appeal system, which we have had for 21 years and under which people have applied for visitor or student visas. In Committee, the Minister claimed that clause 12, which abolishes the right of appeal for those refused entry clearance as visitors, students intending to study for less than six months, proposed students and their dependants, is necessary to prevent the immigration appeal system from getting clogged up and thus preventing genuine appeal cases from being heard. The Opposition have never accepted that argument and its policy implications.

6.30 pm

Lords amendment No. 10 proposes that the Secretary of State shall appoint an individual to oversee and review

"in such a manner as the Secretary of State may determine, refusals of entry clearance in cases where there is . . . no right of appeal".

Furthermore, the appointed person

"shall make an annual report on the discharge of his functions to the Secretary of State who shall lay a copy of it before each House of Parliament."

I have a number of criticisms of the role, responsibilities and powers of the appointed person. The proposal is a weak attempt by the Government to cover up the injustice that they will serve on many people in the United Kingdom and their relatives abroad by abolishing the right of appeal.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): My hon. Friend may or may not know that for some time I represented appellants almost on a daily basis. I believe that I was the person involved in the very first appeal, which was heard in July 1970, so our system has been in existence for almost 23 years.

What is wrong is not merely that the right of appeal is being abolished. As my hon. Friend said, that right allowed the tribunal to find that the decisions taken by adjudicators in a number of cases were wrong. Is he aware that, when the entry clearance officer is deciding whether to accept or reject an application, he will bear in mind the fact that he will have to justify the decision if an appeal is lodged? He will have to write an explanatory statement, which will go before an adjudicator in the event of an appeal.

Once the right of appeal is removed, the entry clearance officer will have no fear of what may happen as a result of his decision, because it will not be possible to challenge his decision in any meaningful way.

Mr. Allen: My hon. Friend brings all his experience to bear in pinpointing that important matter. The problem is not merely that decisions in a large number of applications have been rejected and overturned on appeal, but that the checking mechanism of the appeal system, which provides a stimulus to entry clearance officers to get the decision right in the first place, will be removed. The figures on that do not appear in any statistics, because that threat of appeal if people get the decision wrong exists only as an internal policing role.

Of the 13,882 people who appealed on refusal of entry clearance abroad, 3,845 had their appeals allowed. It is outrageous that the Government are prepared to see that those who are initially wrongfully refused entry to the United Kingdom can be left with no recourse to any further consideration of their cases. The Government's proposal of a monitor is inadequate for the appeals procedure. However, we are aware that the monitoring process will be steamrollered through in the normal manner this evening, so it is incumbent on us to make efforts to strengthen the monitoring process, as well as criticising the reason why we need that process—the abolition of the right of appeal.

Our amendments set out proposals to give teeth to the monitor. Initially, they are aimed at ensuring greater independence for the monitor from the Secretary of State. To start with, how independent can a monitor be if he is appointed by the Secretary of State? Our amendment would ensure that the monitor is appointed by the Commission for Racial Equality. The appointee would then have a truly independent role and he would not have his role of independent scrutineer determined by the Secretary of State.

The CRE appointee would determine which cases he investigated and would have access to the files necessary for a proper investigation of refused cases. We believe that the CRE would be the appropriate organisation to appoint the monitor and such an arrangement would ensure that the body that has experience in monitoring the actions of immigration authorities would be able to oversee the workings of the entry clearance system. Its record, and the work that it has done, speak for themselves. It would bring an element of independence to the process, thereby ensuring that all communities could have faith that the process was working on an impartial basis.

That raises the question of adequate resources. The monitor that the CRE chooses must have a properly staffed and resourced office. It is not clear whether the

Secretary of State's appointee will have the adequate secretarial or administrative back-up that a monitor must have if he is to be effective. I hope that the Minister will make it clear that he will have that.

The number of cases that a one-man or one-woman operation could monitor would be minuscule. With one person attempting to dip into the various files and reviews, only a tiny number of cases would be reviewed. Even with this unambitious proposal of monitoring, we should set a target of at least 10 per cent. of refusals being examined by the monitor and his staff. Anything less would render the exercise even more transparently an exercise in camouflage of the abolition of the right of appeal than it is already.

In carrying out his responsibilities, the monitor should, if necessary, be allowed to call witnesses before him to enable him to determine the reasons for refusal of entry clearances. He should have the power to refer any such refusal to the Secretary of State for reconsideration. If he is to be effective, it is essential that the monitor is able to contact those who are refused as individuals and get full access to the notes and files.

The Minister has promised that people will be sent a more detailed refusal letter, but it is not quite clear how detailed that refusal letter will be. There may be notes of an interview between the entry clearance officer and the refused visitor, as referrred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick). Those notes will be set out from the entry clearance officer's point of view, and it seems unlikely that any documents presented to him will be kept. There will be no explanatory statement setting out his thought processes and, more importantly, nothing from the visitor's point of view.

In appeals that succeed, the visitor can usually explain misunderstandings or misinterpretations in the first interview or even give a more full explanation than that recorded by the entry clearance officer. However, as the Bill stands, that information will not be available to the monitor, so his decision will be given after only a cursory examination of some of the papers. We could not readily accept that. Even if, on the information available, the monitor believes that a decision is wrong, there will be no redress for the individual visitor. He will not even know that his case has been reviewed and he will not be informed of the outcome or told that entry clearance will be granted in future. Because he will not know about any review, he cannot make any representations.

If, magically, on that brief random sample the monitor decides that injustice has been done, there will be no way of redressing it. We are not talking about an odd problem or two—last year almost 4,000 individuals won their appeals. This year, people will not even know whether their cases are being reviewed. The Government's proposals will simply perpetuate injustices unless adequate information and access are provided. Indeed, the very fact that an inadequate monitoring system exists may make the position worse. The courts may feel that due process has been gone through, which will undermine the concept of judicial review. The monitor's report, especially if it is favourable, could be used to support any suggestion that decisions are generally fair. That will make it even harder for individual visitors to contest unjust refusals.

It is worth repeating that currently 20 per cent. of refusals are found to be in error on appeal. I make no apology for repeating the analogy that I used some time ago on Second Reading—imagine what would happen if there was a 20 per cent. error rate in other areas of the civil service, perhaps in the income tax returns of hon. Members or their constituents, or perhaps in social security claims. It would be absolutely intolerable.

The very fact that the scale of the problem has been highlighted is due to the appeals system. People can appeal, and we can find out what mistakes have been made. That will no longer be available and the monitor will not be able to overturn even the most blatantly wrong decisions. I hope that the House agrees that that is neither acceptable nor just.

Our amendments would ensure that the monitor reports to the House not once a year, as the Government propose, but monthly. That may appear to be a heavy burden, but as the monitor will have very few powers the least that we should do is to ensure that he regularly alerts the House to the high number of applications being wrongfully refused. Hon. Members can then debate the issue in the House. Of course, this is not really the place where appeals against wrongful refusal should be heard, but if it is all that is available, hon. Members should have the necessary information provided monthly. I repeat that we are talking not about the odd case, but about at least 4,000 cases a year. There would certainly be enough cases to keep hon. Members chewing over the monitor's report each month. We need to scrutinise the system as thoroughly as possible.

The amendments would broaden the scope of the monitor's investigations, which is crucial to improving his proposed role. He should investigate refusals of entry and refusals of entry clearance. We want the monitor to review and investigate the rejection of both and the latter is included in Lord's amendment No. 10. Refusals of leave to enter at airports and ports, or any refusals of students or prospective students, would not then be excluded, as they currently are, from the monitor's remit.

We are conscious of the need to give the monitor teeth. We have realised for some time that the Government's intention behind this proposal is merely to give some respectability to the withdrawal of the right of appeal for those refused entry clearance. We give the right of appeal to a common murderer, but not to a mother seeking to enter this country to be present at, for example, a family funeral, christening or other religious ceremony. In the Government's view, they are not worthy of retaining the right of appeal.

6.45 pm

The plan to conceal the abolition of the right of appeal has not worked. I call upon the Government to accept the amendments and give the monitor some genuine powers and a genuine role. If the Government do not do that, they stand accused and condemned of just carrying out a public relations exercise to limit the political damage that they have inflicted not just on themselves, but on many of our innocent fellow citizens, by abolishing the right of appeal.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I must inform the House that amendment No. 10 involves privilege.

Mr. Corbyn: Over the years, I have had a great deal of experience in dealing with individual cases of immigration law and refusals of entry clearance. It takes up an incredible amount of the time of any hon. Member representing a constituency, as I do, which has people from all parts of the world. I shall not go into great detail,

[Mr. Corbyn]

but I can tell the House of the horror and misery caused to those families who cannot be reunited because of the bureaucracy of our immigration rules.

It is fundamentally wrong that our immigration laws should be the opposite of all other presumptions of law. The presumption of guilt is on the individual, there is a lack of right of appeal, a lack of natural justice in dealing with the case and the Secretary of State is judge, jury gaoler, executioner and deportation officer. He has total power over the lives of a large number of people.

The history of the clause with which we are dealing lies in the way that good and expert immigration lawyers have, over the years, consistently challenged the nonsense of the operation of existing immigration law. They have had a number of successful judicial review cases and have also taken cases to the European Court. The Government are attempting to raise the threshold for judicial review in an attempt to evade any accountability for the decisions made by entry clearance officers. Although the Lords amendments do not go anything like as far as I would wish, at least they provide the basis for monitoring and examining what is happening. That has to be a slight improvement on what the Government initially wanted.

We must deal with a number of issues. As my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) said, those seeking entry clearance currently have a right of appeal if the decision goes against them. The appeal is heard and a decision made, albeit often in unfortunate circumstances because frequently those people have already been removed from this country and have lost their ability to return. I understand that in one year, one third of all the cases appealed are successful—yet the Secretary of State wants to remove that right of appeal.

The proceedings in Committee were farcical. It was obvious that Afro-Caribbean and Asian families resident in this country were concerned and angry at the prospect of visitors being unable to come here for happy family events such as birthdays, weddings or the birth of a child, or for sad family events such as funerals. They were alarmed by the prospects of the removal of the right of appeal and the unfettered power that that would give to officers in British missions overseas.

In an attempt to get out of that mess, the Secretary of State contacted the hon. Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Deva), who willingly went along with the nonsense of allowing a second application rather than a proper right of appeal. Presumably the hon. Gentleman presented that as some kind of victory and indication of his parliamentary skills, but the opposite is true. It made an appalling situation even worse. It was a travesty of justice in the first place, and it makes a total mockery of sense of justice to allow a second bite of the cherry if one can afford to pay for it. It is time that was made clear and put on the record.

As to the right of those from Somalia to enter the country at this time, I have been contacted by solicitors representing a number of Somali citizens who seek family reunion. As the Minister knows, if a family gains full asylum status in this country, family reunion is automatic. Increasingly, the Department is both to grant asylum to anyone. I am not sure of the process through which one must go to persuade the Home Office that one is worthy of asylum.

Instead, the Home Office grants the lesser right of exceptional leave to remain, which means a four-year delay until such time as the application for family reunion can be considered. That is a long time in the life of a child, and is totally unjustified and unfair if the Minister knows all along that the Home Office will have to grant entry to the rest of the family at some time, so that it can be reunited.

Persons who are granted exceptional leave to remain in the country must pay the usual visa fees, which can be as much as £60 per person. Those fees are waived in respect of relatives of refugees but not of those given exceptional leave to enter. I do not understand why those persons must pay when they are granted the right of residence in this country for virtually the same reasons as relatives of refugees.

It is time that the Government understood the deep anguish felt by many in this country at the way in which their relatives and friends are treated when they merely try to visit. In Committee, we warned of the implications—of the unpleasantness, and of the total lack of accountability in respect of the work done by entry clearance officers in British missions abroad.

The basic tenet of Government in a democratic society is that official decisions can be challenged at some stage. The only way that an individual can now challenge the decisions of individual immigration officers at British missions abroad or in this country is to contact a Member of Parliament. That Member of Parliament can contact a Minister, and if he does not give a satisfactory answer, the Member of Parliament can try to raise the matter in the House. That is not satisfactory, and there ought to be normal, basic rights of appeal—as there are in every other area of life.

My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North is attempting to improve proposals that he admits are not anyway very satisfactory. The suggestion is that just one individual will serve as a monitor. As just one constituency Member of Parliament, I cannot monitor in detail all the problems that are brought to me—and I am sure that I speak for other right hon. and hon. Members in that regard. How on earth will one individual be able adequately to monitor the situation on behalf of the Government?

The Minister has the largest private office in the whole of Whitehall, and the biggest budget. He has also the largest staff and the biggest volume of individual casework. That is because immigration law has been concocted in such a curious way. We need in its place real rights of appeal, real rights of accountability, and real rights for those who seek family reunion or who want legitimately to join relatives in this country.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North rightly pointed out, there is need also for an independent basis for the monitor. I am not happy with the idea of the Secretary of State appointing a monitor to monitor himself. I can imagine who the Secretary of State might appoint to sit at the desk in the corner of his office, whom he can tell how to monitor the work. Monthly, not annual, reports are needed, as is some form of appeal other than an appeal to the very same Secretary of State who made the original decision or on whose behalf the decision was made.

The issue will not go away. Every few years, the Government try some new means of removing the rights of those who want to join their families, friends and relatives

in this country. We have seen various changes to immigration rules, and the curtailment of the rights of Members of Parliament and of access to judicial review and the European Court. There is now to be a lack of any form of appeal against decisions. When a totally erroneous and ludicrous decision is made, I am sure that a way will be found to have the case made the subject of judicial review—and then we shall be back on the merry-go-round. It is time to review the issue in the light of justice, equality and fair play, rather than make those affected suffer bureaucratic horrors and misery.

The losers in that bureaucratic merry-go-round are the families separated by thousands of miles of sea and mountains of paperwork, and the growing children who are unable to remain with their parents, as they should rightfully do—to live happily and harmoniously. They cannot do so because of the way in which immigration law operates.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): I share the views so eloquently expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) but take them further. My hon. Friend said that the Government will find some way to get around ludicrous decisions, but that will not be possible. Where a ludicrous decision is made, the sufferer will be returned to wherever he or she came from, and then it will be too late to do anything. That is the basic problem of monitoring as opposed to the right of appeal.

The abolition of that right is a monstrous act for a decent country to perform. I declare a certain personal interest, in that all four of my grandparents came to this country at the end of the last century to seek asylum—whether by that term or otherwise—from the vicious miseries then imposed on Jewish people by the Tsar and his armies. As I listened to the debate, I wondered whether my grandparents would even have gained entry to this country on the terms now proposed.

If they had not done so because some official had exercised his or her power, my grandparents would have boarded another ship; if they had the money to do so—or would have been put on another ship. Neither my revered father or I would have had the proud privilege of serving the House, whether as a Member of Parliament or as an official, or in any other capacity.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman is aware that we are debating the abolition of appeal against the refusal of visit visas and mandatory refusals of entry clearance. That has nothing to do with asylum applications or with appeals against the refusal of settlement applications.

Mr. Janner: The whole system of appeals should apply to everyone. My constituents complain that a relative is not allowed entry to attend a funeral——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. What the hon. and learned Gentleman thinks is one thing but, as a lawyer, he will appreciate that the amendments are fairly tightly drawn. The hon. and learned Gentleman's remarks should remain within the bounds of the Lords amendments under consideration.

Mr. Janner: Of course I accept your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I was only responding to the Minister's intervention. I will direct my remarks with pleasure at clause 10, point by point—and then there can be no allegation that I am straying one inch from the path of legal propriety. Amendment No. 10 to clause 10 states:

"The Secretary of State shall appoint a person".

Why should the Secretary of State appoint the monitor? Why should the individual who is to be monitored decide who is to do the monitoring? Even with our system of appointment to Select Committees, one of which I am privileged to chair, it is not the relevant Department or Minister being monitored that appoints the members of that Committee but the Whips. They may make mistakes—for example, no woman serves on the Employment Committee. However, at least the members of Select Committees cannot be accused of being appointed by the Minister.

The Secretary of State is to appoint "a person"—one person to monitor thousands of applications. That will provide thousands of opportunities to do people harm and injustice. That person will not be "an officer of his". What good news. Thank heaven for small mercies. At least the Home Office will not be landed with a responsibility that I am sure its officials would not welcome.

7 pm

The person appointed will monitor refusals not in accordance with the interests of natural justice, but

"in such manner as the Secretary of State may determine".

The Secretary of State will not only appoint the monitor, but decide the way in which that monitor will do his duty. What a travesty. The person to be put on trial will appoint the judge; there will be no jury; and the same person will decide the way in which the tribunal is to proceed. This is not justice, but a cover-up—an attempt to make people think that justice will be available. It is not a way of ensuring that those who come to this country have rights; it constitutes an assurance that no such rights will exist.

The Lords amendment states:

"The Secretary of State shall appoint a person, not being an officer of his, to monitor, in such manner as the Secretary of State may determine, refusals of entry clearance".

Following such a refusal, the applicant must return to his own country, because he will have no right of appeal. The refusal will then be monitored.

Mr. Charles Wardle: That is right.

Mr. Janner: But how is the monitoring to be carried out? I wonder whether the Minister has ever stood beside such people and watched the way in which they work. Of course, there are good ones and bad ones.

Mr. Wardle: Yes.

Mr. Janner: No doubt the Minister has observed such people since taking his present post. Of course, they would not have known who he was; they would have carried out their work in the ordinary way, because the Minister would have appeared incognito.

Can the Minister imagine what it would be like to be a relative of one of my constituents, coming over from India to attend a wedding, and to be told, "Goodbye—out you go. One day, someone will monitor the refusal of your application, and make a report a year later. Her Majesty's Government will consider the report—in such manner as they will determine—and then decide how to deal with it. Eventually, it will be laid before the House." Of course, the Government will have a big enough majority to ram through anything they like, just as they will be able to ram

[Mr. Janner]

through this rubbish tonight—unless there are enough by-elections to change things: that cannot happen soon enough for me.

Refusals will be monitored only when there is no right of appeal,

"and the person so appointed shall make an annual report on the discharge of his functions".

What does that actually mean? The report need not be made at the end of the year; it can be made six months later, by which time everyone who has been refused entry and has gone home will probably be dead. As Keynes said, in the long run we are all dead: certainly, the amendment is a dead measure which will breathe no life into this corpse of a Bill.

Mr. Allen: My hon. and learned Friend is being characteristically generous—even to the Government—in assuming that each refusal will be monitored. Unfortunately, that will not happen; a random selection will be made. Only a handful will be examined, and those whose cases are monitored will be extremely lucky. Who knows what will happen then? No action need arise.

Mr. Janner: If I was trying to be generous, I covered it up as best I could. I certainly was not suggesting that every case would be considered. That cannot happen: cases will be monitored

"in such manner as the Secretary of State may determine".

As my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North has pointed out, the manner in which they are monitored will depend on the staff allotted to the one person who is to act as supreme monitor of the public school machinery that is being installed to determine who is allowed into the country.

What will happen to the report? The Secretary of State

"shall lay a copy of it before each House of Parliament."

How wonderful. But when will that happen, and what can the House do if it does not like the report? What will happen to those who are sent home, and what will happen to their families? What misery will be caused? How many people who should have been allowed in will be excluded, and what hardship will be imposed by a bad system, a bad Bill and a clause that Opposition Members have tried to improve? No doubt even our modest amendments will be rejected.

I know that the Minister does his best to be kind in individual cases. I urge him to recognise the vast unkindness that clause 10 and the Lords amendment will do, and how little the monitor will be able to do to put matters right.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): I spoke about this matter on Second Reading. I share the concern of families whose connections are refused entry to attend important functions which any normal family would expect to be fully attended. When travelling in different parts of the world, I have talked to entry clearance officers; I genuinely believe that many try to do as fair a job as possible, given the circumstances in which they operate. In some countries —in Thailand, for example, and on the Indian subcontinent—they experience real difficulties.

On Second Reading, I suggested that offence is caused to those who issue invitations in this country, and that it might be worth while to consider sponsors and their supporters. In my constituency, the cases that cause the gravest offence involve people who have made a considerable effort to invite visitors—parents, perhaps—and to fill in forms saying that no claim for social security will be made. They may have gone to further trouble by coming to my surgeries and asking me to countersign such forms.

Many such people are stalwarts in their local communities, and are constantly praised at various functions for being law-abiding and contributing so much to society. I sincerely believe that that is the case. When their relatives are refused entry, the impression is given that they are colluding with someone who is seeking to break the law, which gives enormous offence.

Many appeals are submitted after the wedding, or whatever, has taken place: the appellant realises that, by the time the appeal is heard, it will be pointless, but wishes to justify the original invitation. Appellants want to clear their names, and to make it clear that the invitation was genuine and that they would not collude with any illegal activity.

I have corresponded with entry clearance officers, and I know how they work. As I said on Second Reading, I want to help them. They will often set on one side the information given from this country. The applicant sitting before them may be very unsophisticated, with no knowledge with what the ECO is fishing for. The person who has invited the applicant may have a shop, and the applicant may be asked whether he will be working.

In normal circumstances, someone staying with a relative who has a shop would be odd not to help out, and that might be understood to mean work; but it would bring about an immediate refusal, because an application for a work permit is not being made. Unsophisticated applicants may be caught out—although it may not be intended—by questions with a legalistic base, which do not relate to the ordinary existence of those who issue invitations.

I agree with what Opposition Members have said. We want justice to be done. I understand the reasoning behind the amendment: to allow appeals to be heard more quickly so that families who are settled here can bring to this country wives and others who are at the end of a long appeals system, which to some extent is clogged by people who want to make short-term visits.

People usually issue invitations for important functions well in advance, and therefore should not be faced with refusals that can cause great offence. A doctor in my constituency did not speak for three months after his parents were refused the opportunity to come here. Fortunately, I was able to intervene, and eventually his parents were allowed entry. The shock and horror of refusal, after issuing a perfectly normal invitation to his parents to come and stay with him for a short time, caused tremendous offence to that doctor.

Many of us are very uneasy about there being no right of appeal. I do not know whether figures are available which show that people who came here on a visitor's visa stayed on illegally. I suspect that some have. It would be odd, given human nature, if that had not happened, but I suspect that the number is tiny, compared with the number of refusals.

I shall listen carefully to what the Minister says about monitoring and about how account is to be taken both of the invitee and of the invitations issued by British citizens, who have every right to ask members of their families to join them here for important family occasions.

Mr. Boateng: The Government add insult to injury by their amendment of clause 10. The injury is the removal of the right of appeal. The insult is the imposition of a monitor. What we wanted, what we hoped to see, was some sort of watchdog. What we got was a poodle—not just a poodle but a blinded poodle, a poodle with its vocal chords cut, a neutered poodle, a poodle incapable of uttering so much as the barest squeak of disapproval against any action taken by an entry clearance officer or any immigration officer who determines an application to enter at a port of entry. That is not good enough.

The hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) referred to the sponsors, to those who issue the invitations. The experience of many of us—I cannot believe that it is confined to those who sit on this side of the House—is that the most important feature of a sponsor, someone who issues an invitation, and very often the determining feature of a sponsor, is not the merits of a particular case, whether it be an invitation to a wedding, a christening or another innocuous family event, but the colour of the sponsor and the race of the sponsor who issues the invitation. There is no escaping the issue of racism that underpins this provision.

I would not be making a protest with the force and strength that I do about this amendment if I, or any other hon. Member, could be satisfied that racism was not involved in the administration of the immigration system. We all know that it is. We all know that a different standard applies to visitors from Canada, the United States and other areas of the world from that which applies to the Indian subcontinent, Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America. If one's skin is black or brown, the reality is that one will be treated differently. That is the truth of the matter.

7.15 pm

I wish that the Minister could say with conviction that that is not the case, but he knows that it is the case and that different criteria apply depending upon the origin of those in the community who issue the invitations and the place to which they are sent. That is the conclusion to which all of us, regrettably, have come. No one should easily make the charge of racism. All too often it is easy enough to cry "Racist", but those of us who deal with these cases day in, day out do not make that charge lightly. It is a charge that is borne out by the facts.

What is so nauseating about amendment No. 10 is that, having abolished the right of appeal, it proposes the appointment of a monitor. This person will be appointed by the Secretary of State. His functions will be determined by the Secretary of State. He will be resourced by the Secretary of State. He will be expected to oversee the role of the entry clearance officers.

That is not good enough. There must be a better way. Those who take an interest in these matters are left with the suspicion that an agenda has been embraced by the Home Office: to seek every opportunity to minimise the capacity for there to be some surveillance, some control over the operation of the immigration rules by entry clearance officers and others.

The suspicion is that the Home Office does not want the entry clearance officers to be scrutinised or to be accountable, and that it wants those who make these decisions to know that the opportunities for scrutiny and for people to be brought to book where there has been injustice will be minimised.

The Minister has received many representations. I do not question the fact that he takes our representations seriously, nor do I question the care and attention that both he and those who work for him give to them. However, it is precisely because of that care and attention, and precisely because the Minister knows that, time and time again, injustices have occurred, by virtue of the nature of the decisions and the judgments that have been reached, that there ought to be a right of appeal.

It is precisely because the right of appeal is to be abolished, which we condemn, as does everyone who knows or cares about this subject, that we say that this monitoring process must be capable of providing some redress for those who suffer injustice as a result of the omissions and mistakes of the officials who are charged with this responsibility.

The proposed monitoring does not go far enough. We do not accept it. We believe that it is right to seek to strengthen it. Even at this late stage, we hope that the Minister will go at least some of the way towards recognising that the monitoring process needs to be beefed up and made more accountable to this House, so that individuals can be given some hope of redress.

Mr. Gerrard: As many of my hon. Friends have already said, the clause to which the amendment relates includes some of the most controversial aspects of the Bill and those most likely to affect people already living in this country. I am referring to the abolition of the right of appeal for visitors who are refused entry clearance and the great distress caused by such refusals to the families involved. The abolition will also apply to students.

Lords amendment No. 10 allows for the monitoring of refusals of entry clearance, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) said, not refusals of leave to enter. That is an important distinction, which can be significant for people who arrive as potential visitors from countries where visas are not required before coming to the United Kingdom. I shall say more about that issue later.

The Government have said that all refusals will be checked by senior officers. I think that, in saying that, the Minister was attempting to reassure people that appeals would be dealt with in another way. However, reconsideration by a senior officer of a refusal will not give people confidence that an independent decision has been made. The amendment contains the Government's alternative proposal, which is to check or audit refusals of entry clearance. As has already been said, that is no substitute for the right of appeal, but, if that is how we are to proceed, we should at the very least do it properly, which is the purpose of our amendment.

I was interested in the way in which the amendment was first moved in another place. The Minister there spoke of the intention—the periodic review by an independent person of a sample of cases in which entry clearance had been refused. It was stated that the person appointed to carry out the review should be seen to be independent of the Home Office or the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, that entry clearance officers and managers would not know in advance which cases were to be examined and that the results should be made public. It is worth questioning whether the amendment matches even those very limited aims. Perhaps the Minister will tell us in more detail how the monitoring will work.

[Mr. Gerrard]

Who will decide which cases are to be reconsidered? Will it be the monitor or the Home Office? In what depth will the cases be examined? What access will the monitor have to files? Will he be able to examine files from British posts abroad? Will he be allowed to examine instructions to entry clearance officers and sit in on interviews to see at first hand how the process is conducted? Will the annual report contain details of individual cases that the monitor has examined? If publication is to be merely a statistical exercise, it will be relatively worthless. Of course, the statistics of the cases checked by the monitor need to be published, but we should also be allowed to consider individual cases, to know what the monitor thought of them and his recommendations for improvements, if necessary. What level of staffing will be provided?

One reason that the Government gave for refusing the appeals system was cost. Another was the backlog that was building up. When the formal right of appeal has been abolished, there are likely to be more refusals and, therefore, more cases that the monitor should review. Even if a reasonable sample is taken—for example, 10 per cent., as my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North suggested—we could end up with a system under which the sample to be considered will be as great as that under the previous appeals system, but with much less chance of justice because the system will not provide redress to individuals.

I am especially concerned about the people who are refused entry, an issue dealt with in amendment (e). It is, of course, perfectly possible for people to be refused entry as opposed to entry clearance. Those who are refused entry do not at the moment have a formal right of appeal. Many avenues, such as approaching a Member of Parliament, have been cut off. Many people who have dealt with such cases, for example, hon. Members who have taken up the cases of constituents who are refused entry when arriving for a visit, will know of the inconsistencies and the subjective nature of the decisions made.

Why is one person refused entry, another given temporary admission and another admitted? It is often extremely difficult for anyone dealing with such cases to see any distinction between them. As my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) said, the one distinction that can often be made is the colour of the skin of the person applying to enter the country.

Last year, I had the experience of dealing with someone who had been stopped at Heathrow, arriving for a visit. A constituent contacted me about the case and was appalled at the way in which the person had been treated at the airport and the fact that his word was being questioned. In fact, in that instance, the person was a white American who could hardly believe what was happening. I told him that it happened every day, certainly to black and Asian constituents, whose friends and relatives are stopped at the airport. They may be angry, upset, annoyed and appalled that their word is being questioned, but they are never surprised because they know that it happens as a matter of course.

People often get in touch when a visitor is coming and ask whether they can contact me if they need help when the relative arrives at the airport. It is expected that the visitor will be stopped, especially where visas are not required and it is merely a refusal of entry—they are the cases which will not be monitored under the Government's proposals.

Our amendment would have the important effect of bringing refusals of entry into the monitoring system. Although such a provision might be inadequate, such cases would at least be considered in some form. Clearly, Lords amendment No. 10 will be accepted. As has been said, it is grossly inadequte, but if it is to be put into effect, our amendment, which should be accepted, would at the very least provide something of use. If the Lords amendment remains in its present form, it will be wholly inadequate.

Mr. Winnick: It is right that Members of all parties should be concerned about the abolition of the appeals system. The hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) and some of my hon. Friends have spoken about the Bill's effect on community and race relations.

It cannot be emphasised too often that this part of the Bill affects many people, some of whom were born here or have been in Britain for a long time, who are perfectly entitled to be here and who are part and parcel of our country. They might invite someone to this country—usually a close relative or friend—and then find that it is extremely difficult for the invitee to get in, especially if the sponsor is of West Indian origin or is originally from the Indian sub-continent. When I dealt with such cases some years ago, it was rare for my clients to be European. The explanation is perfectly simple—Europeans have much less difficulty in coming here as visitors than do people from the West Indies or the Indian sub-continent.

What should concern the Government is the number of refusals—referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen)—that have been overturned by the adjudicator. Why is it that in such a large percentage of cases in which a person has been refused entry—obviously a minority of cases, that is not in dispute—and in which an appeal has gone before an adjudicator in Britain, the refusal has been overturned? Without even being able to see the appellant involved—he cannot do that—the adjudicator has judged that the decision taken by the entry clearance officer is wrong and the appeal has been upheld.

Instead of being concerned that so many cases have been overturned, the Government have decided to abolish the right of appeal itself. The Government seem so embarrassed by the fact that those decisions have been overturned that they have decided not to allow that to occur any longer by taking away the right of appeal.

7.30 pm

I remember representing a young Palestinian woman who had been in Britain for a short time. She worked here, she was perfectly entitled to be here and she was not subject to any restrictions. She invited over her brother who was living in a middle eastern country. The entry clearance officer decided that the brother should not be allowed to enter Britain because he would have no incentive to leave this country. Fortunately, an appeal was made and when the case went before an adjudicator, his sister, the sponsor, explained that she had not seen her brother for a long time and that she was able to support him for the short period in which he would be living in Britain. I am pleased to say that the adjudicator decided that the appeal should be allowed.

I find it difficult to believe that, under the Government's proposal for someone to monitor refusals, such a case would come to the surface. After all, how many cases will the monitor consider? We have been told that it will not be literally every case. He may not look at one in five or even one in 10. The case to which I have referred might not even have come to the monitor's attention if such a position had existed in the past and if there had been no appeals system.

It must be emphasised that the entry clearance officer decides whether a person should enter the country on the basis of the facts that are presented. He must be satisfied that the person will leave Britain at the end of his stay. Of course, that is why there are quite a number of refusals and why the appeals system is in operation.

If the Minister had told us that the appeals system was being abolished because of the number of successful appeals after which a person, having won the right to come here on a visit, decided to overstay, at least we could have had some sort of reasoned argument, even if we disputed that statement. As I understand it, however, the Minister has not said that the appeals system is being abolished because people have abused it by deciding to stay, against the law, after winning their appeal, and that it has been a job for the Home Office to locate those people so that it can turf them out. We have not had a reasoned argument for the abolition of the appeals system.

I said in an intervention that the appeals system is useful because when the original decision is being taken by the entry clearance officer, that immigration official working abroad has to be careful. He or she knows that if the person is refused and there is an appeal, he will have to write an explanatory statement which will go before the adjudicator. He will have to set out all the arguments—sometimes four, five or six pages long—to justify the decision. That will no longer occur under the Government's proposals. The entry clearance officer, however conscientious he or she may be, will know that if the answer is no, the chances of the decision being challenged are very slim.

The monitor may pick up the decision during his year's work, but most likely that will not occur. If a Member of Parliament writes to the Minister, it is, again, not likely that the entry clearance officer will have to go to the same lengths to justify his decision as he would if there were an appeals system. The new system will work against the person who is trying to come to the United Kingdom for a genuine visit.

As we know, there has been an outburst during the past week or so about the number of people coming to Britain. There has been an upsurge of racism among Conservative Members, although fortunately a small minority. Again, the race card is being played and, again, we are being told as we have been told previously of the hordes of people who are coming over to Britain and of the alien invasion.

We know how tight immigration control is in practice. We know how difficult it is for people to come over here. We know that primary immigration into Britain ended years ago. Those of my hon. Friends who take up cases all the time know how difficult it is for many people even to be able to come on a visit here if they come from the Indian sub-continent or from the West Indies. That is a fact. It is unfortunate that people who legitimately want to invite a close relative or friend or friend from the parts of the world that I have mentioned should find it even more difficult as a result of the Government's decision.

The Minister is a courteous person. I have found that whatever decisions he reaches, he is always willing to listen, unlike some of his predecessors. I am sure that my hon. Friends appreciate that we have a Home Office Minister who is courteous and who at least listens to our representations. However, he has a very bad brief. The Government have taken a wrong decision which is harmful to community and race relations. Perhaps even at this very late stage—one is obviously not hopeful—there will be further serious consideration of the proposal by the new Home Secretary.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): It is always a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), who has enormous experience of dealing with immigration and race policies, especially as he is a former chairman of the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service. On Second Reading, I warned the Minister that it would be unacceptable to replace a right of appeal with the administrative arrangements that he had in mind then. The whole House regrets the fact that he chooses now to add the official monitor to his list of administrative arrangements. That will not make up for the fact that the right of appeal will be removed.

On Second Reading and when we most recently discussed the matter, I listed a number of immigration officers and entry clearance officers in posts abroad. I shall not repeat their names for fear of further damaging their careers. I told the Minister then that those entry clearance officers were very concerned about the fact that the Government proposed to take away the right of appeal. I hope that the Minister will tell the House that he has now had a chance to consult those entry clearance officers and that they are in full agreement with the Government's decision to remove the right of appeal and to replace it by the appointment of the monitor.

It is not clear precisely whom the Minister has in mind to be the official monitor.

Mr. Winnick: Lord Owen.

Mr. Vaz: Perhaps the Minister has in mind the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill), the uninvited guest of his Parliamentary Private Secretary, the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham). Perhaps he will be chosen because of his unbiased and fair views on immigration policy. The House has a right to know how the monitor will be chosen. My hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North has suggested Lord Owen. Lord Walker may be another possibility, as he seems to sit on most of the quangos that the Government have created. The identity of the monitor is of great interest to the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) refers to the proposal as being akin to putting in place a neutered poodle without vocal chords. I think it is akin to something even smaller than a poodle—perhaps a neutered chihuahua with no vocal chords. Clearly, the person appointed by the Minister will be responsible to him. It is clear that it would not be possible for that person to take the place of a well established appeals system that has proved in many cases to be one in which people can have faith.

I am concerned about the great backlog in the appeal system and I wish that cases could have been dealt with much more quickly. It is odd when there is a backlog simply to abolish the tribunal that is considering the cases.

[Mr. Vaz]

The entry clearance officers in Bombay and in New Delhi told me that they want a fair system. They thought that it was wrong that they should have to second-guess themselves, because they could not possibly act impartially once they had rejected a case. Even if that case were given to another member of staff—perhaps a more senior member such as a first secretary—that person would still be in close contact with the other entry clearance officers. They preferred a system whereby "an independent tribunal"—dare I repeat the words that the Minister writes to hon. Members almost every week?—"set up by Parliament to consider independently the merits of the case" should consider that case.

I pick up on a point that was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard). Ministerial decisions have been hived off to officials and quangos such as that which will no doubt surround the new official monitor. My hon. Friend's point concerned the way in which hon. Members have to deal with immigration officers at Heathrow airport and other ports. He is right to raise the serious problems that are now occurring because of the misuse of the guidelines by immigration officers.

Those in the Minister's private office know all about one case of mine because I rang up and had a rant to them about it. As usual, I was dealt with very courteously. Under the present guidelines, hon. Members must deal with officials at both the posts and at the ports. Instead of a reasonable conversation with the Minister or one of his officials, hon. Members must deal with officers who, by the nature of their shift pattern, have to go off after dealing with a case and interviewing a client. That case is taken over by another immigration officer who has no direct knowledge of the way in which the matter was dealt with. A relative of a constituent of mine was kept in detention for 48 hours because officials could not find an interpreter in the language of his choice. It cost the taxpayer more to keep that person in detention rather than to give him temporary admission.

When I asked for permission to speak to that person, I was told by the immigration officer that I would have to leave my constituency duties in Leicester and travel to Heathrow where I would be allowed to interview the person. The officer did not consider it appropriate in those circumstances for the person to be put on temporary admission, although the person's sponsor, who was well known to me, was prepared to give any guarantee necessary in order to ensure that that person was properly interviewed. It is a denial of the rights of hon. Members that we are not permitted to see such people at our surgeries in our constituencies.

Everyone has, to some extent, lavished the Minister with praise about how courteous, kind, nice and reasonable he is. I have yet to experience an occasion on which I have brought to the Minister's attention the case of an abandoned spouse when he has been courteous and offered me a cup of tea and said that that person could stay. Perhaps he will do so in the future.

If the Minister will not listen to the views of Opposition Members and also those of the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester), who has yet again come out in support of the rights of people to be able to visit their relatives in this country, he should listen to voluntary organisations. Those organisations—such as the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service and the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants—have come forward with tremendous experience. Those organisations and others, including the churches, have urged him to think again about the removal of the right of appeal and I urge him even at this late stage to do so.

7.45 pm

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have listened to the debate with care. The hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) referred to the refusal of temporary admission and to people's being kept in detention. I emphasise that temporary admission is considered and granted wherever possible. It must be for the immigration service to decide where that is not appropriate. I suspect—I am guessing here—that the hon. Gentleman may have been referring to a recent case concerning a constituent of his who was a sponsor of someone who came from Malawi. I may have that right or I may have it wrong. I suspect from the name of the individual concerned that he came from northern Malawi. If so, he need have looked no further than to me if he wanted someone to exchange a few words in Chichewa with that individual—but I will leave it at that.

The House will be aware that the abolition of appeals against refusal of visit visas and the right of appeal against mandatory refusals has already been debated and passed in both Houses. The hon. Member for Nottingham, North, who opened the debate, talked of strengthening the monitoring process. In fact, the Opposition amendments seek to do more than that: effectively, they seek to reinstate the appeal powers.

The Opposition amendments to Lords amendment No. 10 seek to reinstate some form of appeal process for visitors and others who lose their right of appeal under the provisions of the Bill. When my noble friend the Minister of State accepted amendment No. 10—it was, of course, Baroness Flather who moved it—he made it clear that we were not contemplating some alternative form of appeal system by which applicants or sponsors could seek to have the decision in an individual case overturned, but, rather, a periodic review or audit of a random sample of entry clearance refusals by an independent person, to ensure that fair and consistent standards of decision making were maintained. The Opposition's proposed amendments seek, in effect, to hijack that scheme and turn it into something very different. Not only do they seek to create an avenue through which to challenge decisions in individual cases; they would create a system that would be even more wasteful, cumbersome and ineffective than the appeals procedures that are to be abolished.

Amendments (a), (b), (c) and (f) seek to involve the Commission of Racial Equality in the process, either by having the Commission conduct the monitoring or by having it nominate the person who is appointed to conduct the exercise. The Commission performs a valuable service in promoting race relations, but the proposed monitoring of administrative procedures and decisions by entry clearance officers is simply not an appropriate function to give to that body.

Amendment (d) would make the appointed person rather than the Secretary of State responsible for determining the manner in which the monitoring should be conducted. We have made it clear, however, that the person appointed will have a wide degree of independence in the way in which he conducts the exercise. The choice of

which cases should be reviewed will be entirely his. However, the exercise must in practice be conducted within agreed guidelines on such matters as how long the exercise should last, how many posts should be visited and when the report is produced. Those matters must ultimately be the responsibility of the Secretary of State. I refer here to the Foreign Secretary because this matter concerns the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Amendment (e) would extend the scope of the monitoring to cover refusals of leave to enter at United Kingdom ports as well as refusals of entry clearance. That is simply not practical. It has nothing to do with my noble Friend's amendment—nor is it necessary in order to maintain consistent standards at the ports.

Amendment (g) would require monthly rather than annual reports to be made to the Secretary of State. That implies a continuous monitoring process, rather than the periodic audit review that is envisaged. It is not, in our view, justified.

The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) talked about Somali asylum seekers and about family reunion in cases of exceptional leave to remain after four years. A distinction must be drawn between the granting of exceptional leave to remain and the granting of refugee status under the terms of the Geneva convention.

In an entertaining contribution, the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) said that it was monstrous that this country should abolish appeals in such cases. However, he omitted to tell the House that we are the only country in the world to have such a system. Other countries do not have such a system—not because of a lack of innate fairness, but simply because they know that the system that we have employed for the past 20 years is cumbersome and does not work.

Millions of people visit this country every year. There were 5·7 million visitors in 1991, in addition to other short-term visitors, and that figure relates just to non-EC nationals. If we add the EC nationals to the total, it is clear that we provide a broad welcome. The House might wish to recall that more than 92 per cent. of applications for visit visas were approved in 1991.

My hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) and the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) referred to sponsors. I agree with them that some appeals have certainly been prompted by a sense of hurt on the part of sponsors when they face rejection. That is precisely why in Committee we introduced the various administrative improvements which include guidance for the sponsor, guidance for the applicant and a daily review at the station by senior officials. If there is swift feedback of additional information that alters the case, it will be dealt with promptly. If a refusal notice is issued, it will be clear that that will not prejudice further applications.

The hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) referred to racism. I entirely reject his assertion. I remind the House that there is a clear-cut policy in the immigration service with regard to racism to ensure that there is absolutely no prejudice in the service. I remind the hon. Gentleman that, as a result of discussions, both in Committee and outside with the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), I have introduced a new system of auditing complaints against the immigration service which will be independent of Home Office officials. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will agree that that is an important step forward.

Mr. Madden: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Wardle: I will not give way for the moment. I will break my generous rule for once because I am aware of the time.

The audit of the work of entry clearance officers will act as a check on that work.

The hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) referred to refusals. It must make much more sense to consider the refusals each day rather than to launch into a cumbersome appeals system which may run for two years, by which time the event, in respect of which someone originally intended to come to this country, will long since have passed. I remind the hon. Member for Walthamstow, as I reminded the House earlier, that amendment No. 10 was not moved by my noble Friend the Minister of State. It was moved by Baroness Flather.

The hon. Member for Walsall, North, whose work as chairman of UKIAS was outstanding and distinguished, also referred to the need to control the work of entry clearance officers. I remind him that there will be a daily review by the senior officer in post in addition to the audit system that I have described.

Mr. Madden: Will the audit of complaints against immigration officers be published and reported to the House on a regular basis? The Minister has made great play of the daily review. Clearly hon. Members will be passed much information and complaints when applications are refused. Should we ring the Minister's office or that of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when we want to pass on that information which ECOs around the world will be desperately anxious to receive on a daily basis?

Mr. Wardle: The answer to the hon. Gentleman's first question is yes. In response to his second question, when he is dealing with entry clearance officers, he must approach my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

I refer briefly to Government amendment (j). Amendment No. 10 requires a person to be appointed to monitor a sample of entry clearance refusals. The person carrying out that function will obviously have to be paid an appropriate fee and other expenses such as travel costs will have to be met. Amendment (j) provides the authority for those payments to be made. As I have already said, the scheme will be administered by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the appointment will be made by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary.

With respect to amendments Nos. 10 and 11, concerns have been expressed in both Houses that, unless the system is open to some form of independent oversight, inconsistent and arbitrary decision making may follow removal of the right of appeal. The Government intend to ensure that the entry clearance system is fair and consistent and that it is properly controlled. The Government were happy to accept amendment No. 10, which provides for the appointment of an independent person to carry out periodic monitoring of a sample of entry clearance work to ensure that fair and consistent standards of decision making are maintained.

I make it clear that we are not contemplating an alternative appeals procedure. This will not be a procedure for applicants or sponsors to seek to have a decision in an

[Mr. Wardle]

individual case overturned. The monitoring will complement the administrative measures that I announced in Committee, including the daily review of refusals by entry clearance managers, to which I have already alluded.

Matters of detail are in the process of being worked out. However, I can confirm that the key features of the scheme that will be introduced are as follows: the monitoring will be conducted over a regular period; the person appointed to conduct the exercise will be independent of the Home Office and of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office; entry clearance officers and managers will not know in advance which of their cases are to be examined—that is where the control element lies; and the reports of the independent person will be made public.

I hope that that goes some way towards allaying the fears that have been expressed by some hon. Members that the removal of rights of appeal will lead to arbitrary decision making. For that reason, I urge the House to reject the Opposition amendments and to accept the Government amendments.

Question put, That amendment (a) to the Lords amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 235, Noes 278.

Division No. 287] **[7.57 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heppell, John
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Andrew Mackinlay and Mr. John Spellar.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*

Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, RaymonJ *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'ter V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

Amendment to the Lords amendment accordingly negatived.

Amendment made to the Lords amendment: (j), at end add—

'(3AB) The Secretary of State may pay to a person appointed under subsection (3AA) above such fees and allowances as he may with the approval of the Treasury determine.'.

Lords amendment No. 10, as amended, agreed to. [Special entry.]

Lords amendment No. 11, agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 12 disagreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 13, 14 and 15 agreed to.

Committee appointed to draw up reasons to be assigned to the Lords for disagreeing to certain of their amendments to the Bill: Mr. Graham Allen, Mr. James Arbuthnot, Mr. Tony Blair, Mr. Secretary Howard, Mr. Charles Wardle; Three to be the quorum.—*[Mr. Charles Wardle.]*

Reasons for disagreeing to certain of the Lords amendments reported, and agreed to; to be communicated to the Lords.

Welsh Language Bill *[Lords]*

8.13 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. John Redwood): I beg to move,

That, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 86 (Nomination of standing committees), any Standing Committee appointed for the consideration of the Welsh Language Bill *[Lords]* shall consist of twenty-eight Members, including not fewer than nineteen Members sitting for constituencies in Wales.

This is my first opportunity to speak from the Government Benches as Secretary of State for Wales. I am deeply conscious of the responsibilities which that office entails. My duty will be to represent the interests of the Welsh people at the heart of government, and to argue the case for Wales when key decisions are being made. I firmly believe that the office of Secretary of State for Wales provides the best way of advancing Welsh interests within the United Kingdom, and the Union the best future for Wales in the wider world.

The Parliament of the United Kingdom is the proper place to debate the needs and aspirations of Wales and all its people. I look forward to those debates, which I hope will prove constructive as well as incisive.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): The Secretary of State has said that he will put the interests of Wales at the heart of his considerations. From time to time conflicts will arise between his known views in respect of, for example, privatisation and reductions in public expenditure and the interests of Wales. Such a conflict would have arisen two weeks ago about the driver and vehicle licensing centre at Swansea, which his predecessor fought hard, on Welsh grounds, to retain there. Will the Secretary of State give an undertaking to the House that when there is such a conflict between his known ideological predilections and Wales, he will give priority to Wales?

Mr. Redwood: That intervention is a little wide of the Bill, but of course I give the assurance that I will put the interests of Wales first. I am extremely happy with what my predecessor did on that issue and with the position of the whole Government, which is in the interests of Wales. The hon. Gentleman should not reach conclusions about what my views might or might not be on certain subjects from the cardboard caricatures that he has in his mind. He should listen to my arguments and my views. We can debate those at the proper time.

I want to continue the dialogue with local government and other important Welsh institutions, which my predecessor initiated, for democracy flourishes beyond this House as well as within it.

The motion is procedural. The Welsh language is an essential feature of the inheritance of these islands. It is spoken in Wales, enriching its cultural life and that of the whole of the United Kingdom. The Government do not require people to speak the language against their will, but wish to give every encouragement to those who wish to speak and to learn it. I believe that those sentiments are widely shared in the House.

The motion relates to the constitution of the Standing Committee to consider the Bill. It is not concerned with, and has no implications for, the Welsh Grand Committee, which is established under Standing Order No. 98. The two Committees are entirely separate and distinct. I will be reflecting on changes that might be made to the role of the

Welsh Grand Committee following the discussions that my predecessor held with Opposition Members. Announcements will be made later: they are not for tonight's debate.

The general rule, so far as the House's consideration of legislation is concerned, is that Standing Committees for the consideration of Bills should have no more than 50 members and should reflect the composition of the House. For Committees considering Bills relating exclusively to Wales, Standing Order No. 86 also provides that every Member representing a Welsh constituency shall be a member of the Standing Committee.

It is not possible to constitute a Committee that satisfies all three requirements of that Standing Order—one with no more than 50 members, which reflects the composition of the House and which includes all Members representing Welsh constituencies. A Committee meeting all those requirements has not been constituted in recent years, irrespective of the party in power. The Labour party's Welsh Language Act 1967, its Welsh Development Agency Act 1975 and the Development of Rural Wales Act 1976 all proceeded other than in accordance with Standing Order No. 86.

Opposition Members usually claim to represent a party of the Union. In 1950, 1964 and 1974 they had no qualms about legislating for England when they failed to win a majority of seats there. As a unionist, I accepted their right so to do.

I hope that we can build cross-party agreement on the substance of the Bill. I have pleasure in commending the motion to the House.

8.18 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): We used to complain about the Secretary of State's predecessor and his over-emphasis on self-promotion and self-presentation. Following the right hon. Gentleman's debut tonight, that is not a charge that we will have to make against him.

I offer the Secretary of State my sincere congratulations on his appointment and wish him well in his post. I know that all my right hon. and hon. Friends who represent Welsh constituencies will be ready and anxious to give him advice on how he should do his job. Who knows, on occasion the right hon. Gentleman might even be prepared to accept it.

The Secretary of State will face a challenging few years. This is the first time to my knowledge that a Secretary of State for Wales has been appointed without any qualification. I am sure that all of us in the House and the wider Welsh community are conscious of the fact that the right hon. Gentleman is in the post only because of the Prime Minister's need to maintain political balance in the Cabinet.

An outgoing right-wing Chancellor was sacked for his incompetence and his departure had to be balanced by an incoming right winger. No one was more right wing than the hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood), so in he came. There was nowhere obvious to put him, so he was given the Welsh portfolio. In that sense, his appointment is an insult to Wales and the Welsh people. We are now represented in Cabinet by its most junior member—a man without experience or qualification, credibility or mandate, who owes his very seat at the Cabinet table to the political caprice of the most incompetent Prime Minister in living memory.

Today's debate is a clear and early sign of the right hon. Gentleman's unsuitability. One thought above all should inform his judgment: neither he nor his party govern with the consent or the authority of the people of Wales. Therefore, the right hon. Gentleman of all people should now be determined to work with the grain of Welsh opinion. However, his very first contribution on the Floor of the House as Secretary of State for Wales is to seek to remove from Welsh Members of Parliament the right to involve themselves with Welsh legislation.

The right hon. Gentleman has some redeeming features. When asked on Radio 4 for one good reason why he should be appointed as Secretary of State for Wales he said, "I like Wales." On HTV he went further and admitted that he had even visited Wales. Even some of the Tory party faithful in Wales have now rallied to his side. Eric Howells, showing that deftness of touch, that cutting intellectual edge that we associate with Welsh Tories, said that Wales was "only 23 motorway junctions" down the M4 from the right hon. Gentleman's constituency. The Secretary of State might not have met Eric Howells yet —he is a Welsh Tory bigwig.

I am afraid that any good will that the Secretary of State may have enjoyed has been squandered tonight. It will be a long time before the Minister of State, Wyn O Fôn, recommends the addition of a new Druid, Sioni Coed-Coch, to the Gorsedd of Bards. I do not know about Sioni Coed-Coch, but I know about Sionis, and we in the valleys know when we have a Sioni before us.

Standing Order No. 86 is clear and its intention is precise. Some 86 years ago the House of Commons resolved that public Bills relating exclusively to Wales should be referred to a Committee constituted so as to include all Members with constituencies in Wales. The Welsh Office has argued in the past and the present Secretary of State argued today that paragraphs (1) and (2) are contradictory, so the entire Standing Order should be set aside. That was the argument advanced almost 12 months ago to the day by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary.

This morning I spoke to the Clerk of the House and his colleagues. Their interpretation is clear and their advice is that paragraph (2)(ii), which states:

"for the consideration of any public bill relating exclusively to Wales, the committee shall be so constituted as to include all Members sitting for constituencies in Wales",

overrides any other provision such as that relating to the Committee reflecting the composition of the House. That is the advice of the Clerks of the House——

Mr. Donald Anderson: Refer to the Attorney-General.

Mr. Davies: The mechanism for resolving that problem is not, as suggested by my hon. Friend, to refer the matter to the Attorney-General, but to refer it to the Committee of Selection so that it may adjudicate. However, the Secretary of State rejects the advice from the Clerks of the House and does not have sufficient confidence to put the issue before the Committee of Selection. There can be no basis for the motion other than the Government's stubborn refusal to acknowledge their own weakness in Wales.

I have four arguments against the motion. First, the view of the House in 1907 was clear. Standing Order No. 86 has stood the test of time. Not once has any attempt been made to amend it. The motion breaches a convention

[Mr. Davies]

to which all parties have subscribed for 85 years, and no good argument has been advanced for breaching the Standing Order tonight.

Secondly, even if there were an inconsistency, as the Government have argued, surely the logical action would be to set aside those parts of Standing Order No. 86 that conflict with the rights of Welsh Members and restore Welsh Members' rights as enshrined in Standing Order No. 86. That is at the heart of the debate. It is beyond dispute that the Welsh Language Bill applies exclusively to Wales. The Government are now not only giving themselves a majority on the Committee, which is at least understandable if not acceptable in the current circumstances, but deliberately removing the right from half of all Welsh Members—all of whom are Opposition Members—to have any say in the detailed deliberation on a Bill with direct and specific relevance to their own constituencies.

The Bill contains provisions relating to the cultural inheritance of all of us in Wales, whether English or Welsh speaking, the civil liberties of many of our people and the education of all of our children. The development of the Welsh language, influenced as it is by geographical experience, past prejudices and present campaigns, can be a powerful, emotive and divisive issue with the potential to affect us all. It is an abuse of power and a travesty of democracy for Welsh Members of Parliament who seek to represent the views of their constituents to be prevented from so doing by a Secretary of State who is currently little more than an apparatchik.

It is no good arguing, as we have heard today, that the provisions have been set aside before. My third argument against the motion is that, with only one exception, whenever Standing Order No. 86 has previously been suspended, it has been with the agreement of the Opposition, and one of two sets of circumstances has applied. Either the measure to be considered in Committee was of a non-controversial nature, such as the Conwy Tunnel (Supplementary Powers) Act 1983 and the Caldy Island Act 1990, or it was set to one side by a Labour Government with the agreement of the Opposition for the particular purpose of facilitating that Opposition. That was done in the case of the Welsh Development Agency Act 1975 and the Development of Rural Wales Act 1976. Those precedents are clearly not relevant to the business before us.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): The hon. Gentleman will agree that, in those cases, even when there was agreement with the Opposition, the process was carried out with the approval of the House, which is what really matters.

Mr. Davies: That is precisely my point, and I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for making it for me. Today the Opposition's support is being withheld. In the case of the 1975 and 1976 Acts, the setting aside of Standing Order No. 86 was done not merely with the agreement of the Opposition, but specifically at their request. The fact is that there were not enough Conservative Members representing Welsh constituencies to man the Committee. That is why they wanted the Standing Order set aside—so as to provide an Opposition spokesman. It is no good the right hon. Member for Conwy (Sir W. Roberts) saying that that should be taken as a precedent. There is no precedent, and we bitterly resist the motion.

I hope that my exchanges with the Minister have made clear the fact that we do not regard the Acts of 1975 and 1976 as precedents. It is true that the Bill was given an unopposed Second Reading, but there is common ground among all the Opposition parties about many matters of detail in the Bill, and common disagreement about them with the Government. I refer, for instance, to whether the Bill's provisions should apply to privatised utilities. It is inevitable that some matters will be pressed to a Division—hence the precedents of the non-controversial Bills of 1983 and 1990 are not relevant.

The one exception, mentioned earlier, was the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill, which was taken 12 months ago almost to the day. That measure was opposed in Divisions, but even so, the circumstances were quite different. That Bill was itself a precedent, being a private Bill that was later converted to a public Bill. There were differing views, held across all parties, on that Bill's merits, and it was highly localised in its application.

No such factor applies here. On the contrary, the Welsh Language Bill directly and exclusively affects the constituents of every Welsh Member, and there is a consensus among 32 of the 38 Welsh Members of Parliament. Surely these are the precise circumstances in which Standing Order No. 86 should apply?

Fourthly, the Secretary of State said that the Standing Order did not refer to the Welsh Grand Committee. I have to correct him: as he will know by now, Standing Order No. 86 specifically refers to that Committee:

"Save in the case of—*(a)* the Scottish Grand Committee, *(b)* the Welsh Grand Committee".

All Welsh constituency Members are entitled, as of right, to sit on the Welsh Grand Committee. There is widespread agreement that its proceedings need to be reviewed. The previous Secretary of State conducted his own review, and the present Secretary of State said tonight that he would decide the course of that Committee.

If the new Secretary of State takes this arrogant and abrasive line on the proceedings of the Welsh Grand Committee, he will come rapidly unstuck. The Welsh Grand Committee belongs to Welsh Members of Parliament; it is not the plaything of the Minister or of the Government Whips Office.

Mr. Redwood: If the hon. Gentleman had listened carefully to what I said, he would know that I said that my predecessor had conducted consultations with Opposition Members on this subject and was putting together his responses in the light of those consultations. It is in that spirit that I shall present the Government's conclusions, in addition to undertaking any other consultations that I think appropriate. I give the hon. Gentleman that promise. I hope that he will now remove from the record what he has just said, which went against the spirit of my remarks.

Mr. Davies: I shall certainly not remove any remarks from the record. The Secretary of State's earlier remarks are on the record; he has now compounded his error by saying that the former Secretary of State prepared his proposals for the review of the Welsh Grand Committee in the light of representations made to him. He may have conducted a review, but its findings were certainly not made in the light of the representations made to him. They were made in spite of those recommendations.

The former Secretary of State conducted his review making it clear initially that he wanted additional powers for the Committee to debate, to question Ministers and to deal with legislation. The Prime Minister recognised the democratic deficit in Scotland and promised a review as part of the "taking stock" exercise. That review was to include Wales. What better demonstration could there be of the Government's honesty of intent, of their commitment to more democratic forms of government or of their willingness to recognise their minority status in Wales than that the Secretary of State for Wales should have invited comments on how more devolved Government could work and then acted on those suggestions?

On 8 March in the Welsh Grand Committee in Cardiff, and on behalf of a majority of Welsh Members, I made a public and precise suggestion to the Secretary of State which, if it had been accepted, would have obviated the need for this motion. If the Government were interested in greater democracy and consensual politics, my suggestion pointed the way forward for them. We would have agreed not to oppose the Bill's Second Reading, which could have taken place in the Welsh Grand Committee. We would have agreed a timetable for the Committee stage. We would have agreed not to force unreasonable amendments, knowing all the time that the Government still had the security to right any unacceptable wrongs, as they saw them, on Report.

The Government's refusal to accept that suggestion was both unreasonable and myopic. The consequence is that Standing Order No. 86 has to be suspended, and many Welsh Members are excluded from detailed debate on the Bill. The Government's obstinacy provides a compelling reason for us to oppose the motion.

We must ask ourselves why the Government are embarking on this course of action. It cannot be to protect their legislative timetable or to avoid damaging or wrecking amendments to the legislation. That would not be in the interests of Welsh Members. It is patronising to suggest that Welsh Members would pass amendments that would damage the interests of the Welsh language or the wider interest of Wales and our constituencies. In any event, we have offered adequate guarantees covering these matters.

Why cannot the Secretary of State show a little more confidence, originality or initiative than his predecessors did? Why does the condescending, "we-know-best" mentality always have to take priority over flexibility, variety and political reality?

The answer lies in the nature of the Conservative party—and in this Secretary of State we find that party at its most ideological. To avoid this motion, the Government would have to accept that new arrangements should apply to our parliamentary procedures, at least in so far as they affect Wales. They would have to be prepared to compromise and to work with the grain of Welsh public opinion. None of that is acceptable to the present-day Conservative party. Its members call themselves unionists. The Secretary of State used the word again this evening. In fact, Conservatives are members of a centralist party. Only a party so insecure about its own future and so uncertain of its purpose would feel threatened by diversity.

As a former Trade Minister wrote in *The Spectator* last week, the Prime Minister heads

"a regime unwilling to tolerate dissent and afraid of views different from its own."

That Minister was sacked for holding those views, yet his ideology is at one with the Secretary of State's. The one is sacked, the other promoted. That shows the extent to which the Government are in disarray; it is a clear demonstration of their incoherence. It is because the Government feel threatened that they want to set aside our constitutional arrangements for their own party political convenience—and Welsh Members will have none of it.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Before I call the next speaker, I remind the House that this is a procedural motion. I hope that Members will not be tempted to go off on to other topics relating to Wales.

8.38 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I should like to join in the good wishes given to the new Secretary of State for his period at the Welsh Office.

It is slightly puzzling to learn that a transfer to the Department of Employment is regarded as promotion for someone who was the Secretary of State for Wales. Many Welsh Members think that the Welsh Office warrants a senior Cabinet post. After all, the Secretary of State for Wales is responsible for most aspects of Welsh life. He is a sort of viceroy in Wales, covering many Departments. It was surprising that the former Secretary of State, who was born in Wales, should have thought it right to be transferred to another Department to which many Welsh Members, had any of them been Secretary of State for Wales, would have been reluctant to move.

The new Secretary of State will have been in the House for 10 years on Wednesday. *[Interruption.]* No, he will have been here for only six years on Friday. My mistake shows that he seems to have been here longer than we imagined. During those six years he has certainly shown himself to be clever. People in Wales have a sophisticated view of political life and enjoy their politics. To fulfil not only the expectations but the justified desires of the people of Wales during his term of office, he will have to show that he is not just clever but also wise.

I hope that, in demonstrating the wisdom which I am sure the new Secretary of State wishes to show, he will be willing to listen to representations on issues that are very much alive in Wales and which were being considered by his predecessor. I refer in particular to local government reform, which has had a far from unanimous welcome, especially in rural mid-Wales, and to the desperate problems that will arise in some parts of the Welsh economy if rail privatisation results in the destruction of the Welsh rural railways.

As you are moving towards the edge of your seat, Madam Deputy Speaker, I shall now deal with Standing Order No. 86. It is regrettable that the Standing Order should effectively be suspended for the purposes of a Bill that could not be more Welsh. It is quite extraordinary that the Government should think it right that only two thirds of the members of the Standing Committee should be Welsh Members. More important, it is extraordinary that the Government should regard it as right that half the Welsh Members should be excluded from the Committee.

Every Member representing a Welsh constituency has an interest of one sort or another in the Bill, and some of us have to represent conflicting interests in dealing with the Bill. It is vital that Welsh Members should be able to put

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their views in Committee. The Government have not made a convincing case—they have barely tried to advance any case—for excluding Welsh Members.

On what basis do the Government think that they can circumvent Standing Order No. 86(2)? Surely the words "provided that" are overriding, as suggested by the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies). If the Standing Order is not to be totally suspended for the purposes of the Bill, the Minister cannot override that proviso. The Standing Order makes it impossible for the consideration of a public Bill relating exclusively to Wales to take place without the inclusion of all Welsh Members.

How do the Government propose to deal with the question raised in the earlier part of Standing Order No. 86(2), which states that, in nominating Members to a Standing Committee,

"the Committee of Selection shall have regard to the qualifications of those Members nominated to the composition of the House?"

I understand the Secretary of State's argument about the composition of the House—that needs no further explanation—but how does he expect the Committee of Selection to look at qualifications of non-Welsh Members who are to be nominated to the Committee if the motion is carried?

What qualifications would the Secretary of State and the Minister of State, from whom the Secretary of State is understandably now taking advice, regard as appropriate? Will those who have lost Welsh seats and are now retreads representing English constituencies be regarded as suitably qualified? I doubt that you could properly be advised, Madam Deputy Speaker, that that is a suitable qualification. Would somebody who was born in Wales or has a Welsh grandmother or is perhaps a supporter of Wrexham football club be regarded as qualified to serve on the Committee?

Mr. Donald Anderson: What about someone who has a second home in Wales?

Mr. Carlile: The hon. Gentleman raises an interesting issue. Will knights of the shires who have cottages in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) be regarded as qualified? I raise this as a serious issue and seek a serious answer. How will the Committee of Selection approach the problem?

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): What difference will the suspension of Standing Order No. 86 make to the representation of Welsh Liberals on the Committee?

Mr. Carlile: That is a thoroughly insolent point and all that I would expect from the hon. Member from Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards). He has made insults an art form in the House, but a tedious art form. Perhaps we may return to the issue under debate, which concerns me as ths sole Welsh Liberal Democrat Member but which obviously does not concern the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West. He will be the first Welsh Conservative Member to go at the next election. Obviously, he is perfectly satisfied to have Wales under-represented on the Committee, and his constituents should know that.

The people of Wales take this issue rather more seriously than the trivial, tiresome and irritating hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West. They should be aware of his complete contempt for the interests of the people of Wales—a surprising contempt for a Welsh speaker. The hon. Gentleman's speech on Second Reading was deeply disgraceful and disappointing. Welsh people should know that he is prepared to see Wales sold short, at a democratic discount, in debates on the Bill.

I am sure that the Secretary of State will wish to address the more serious points on Standing Order No. 86. He owes the House an answer, if he has one, and I look forward to hearing it.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: I call Mr. Wigley.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I understood that our procedures allow for hon. Members to be called from alternate sides. Why should two Members in succession be called from the Opposition side? I do not challenge the fact that you called the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), but why do not Conservative Members have the guts to seek to take part in the debate?

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is a somewhat spurious point of order, but no doubt the hon. Gentleman has put over his point.

8.49 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for calling me. I could see that you had little option but to call someone from the Opposition Benches, as nobody from the Government Benches was standing, as far as I could see, but there we are. No doubt the massed ranks of the Conservatives from Wales will come into battle at some stage to defend the new Secretary of State.

Mr. Donald Anderson: Might it not just be possible that even Conservative Welsh Members are not prepared to defend the indefensible and are uneasy about it?

Mr. Wigley: I can well imagine that Tory Members feel considerable embarrassment at the way in which the order is about to be gerrymandered by the House tonight and about the fact that the Minister of State, Welsh Office has been passed over once again for the position of Secretary of State for Wales.

In the past, I have found it necessary to call "I spy strangers" when I have seen strangers in the seat of the Secretary of State for Wales. I shall forgo that tonight in the interest of the time that we have left, but once again we see a Secretary of State for Wales who did not fight the last election in a Welsh constituency, who, by his own admission, does not have a great background of detailed knowledge about Wales and who comes to tell us in the first debate that the rules of the House must be amended to meet the convenience of the governing party and his convenience as Secretary of State.

However, I wish him well in his tenure of office, as the powers that he has are immensely important to my country. In the same way as we co-operated, where it was possible to do so, with his predecessors, we shall always do so where the interests of Wales are concerned—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I wish to hear the hon. Gentleman, but it is very difficult to do so. I trust that hon. Members will listen in silence. In particular, I expect those on the Front Bench to set a good example.

Mr. Wigley: I am grateful for your protection, Madam Deputy Speaker, but to some extent this is an argument within the family and I think that I understand the point that was made: that when we debate Bills—potential Acts—which specifically, totally and uniquely deal with Wales and its needs, we are talking about matters within the family. Those who are within the family know best what is required.

The motion highlights the inability of our system of government to pay attention to the needs and political priorities of the people of Wales, expressed through the ballot box, while at the same time abiding by the conventions and requirements of the governing party in Westminster. The two are mutually contradictory. That is the background to the standing order. As has been said, it was passed in the first decade of the century, following the 1905 general election, when the Conservative party did not win a single seat in Wales. Every seat was held by the Liberal party, with one exception—Keir Hardie, the first Labour Member of Parliament for Merthyr Tydfil.

In the 120 years that we have had democratic representation in Wales, the Conservative party has never had the majority of Welsh seats. The standing order was introduced to meet the need to adapt the system of this place, were that possible—tonight we are beginning to realise that it might not be—to meet those different requirements in Wales and its different political values, aspirations and priorities. At that time, there were debates about setting up educational and health institutions in Wales to meet the needs of the people and there was a raging debate about the disestablishment of the Church in Wales—a debate that England is catching up on now. Against that background, it became clear that it was necessary to have a structure that would allow us at least some modicum of decision-taking on an all-Wales level as representatives elected from Wales.

We find now, as we would have found in that debate, and for a large proportion of this century, that it is not possible for the priorities of the people of Wales to be accommodated within the system of government that we have here. I personally, and my party, believe that that is impossible. This place will never adapt itself in a way that allows the people of Wales to take meaningful decisions at a significant level. Some colleagues believe that it might be possible, but what we are seeing tonight is a denial of that.

It would have been possible, by living with the implications of Standing Order No. 86, for Welsh Members of Parliament to consider the Bill, whether that were achieved by amendment of the maximum of 50 Members on the Committee, or through agreement whereby the Committee was scaled down in a way that reflected the balance of parties among Welsh Members of Parliament rather than the balance among all Members of Parliament. Another way to safeguard the justifiable interests of hon. Members representing different parts of Wales, where circumstances are immensely different, would be to allow a larger Committee.

A Committee on which a majority of Welsh Members of Parliament served, and therefore a Committee with a majority of Members against the Government, would have agreed to amendments that would not be acceptable to the Government. So what? If the majority of the people of Wales want those amendments, and that desire is expressed through their democratically elected representatives, why on earth, even for that limited period between Committee and Report, could not that be shown in the constitutional mechanisms of the House? The Government's majority could overturn those amendments on Report, but the people of Wales would at least know the wishes and aspirations of their representatives. That hope will be snuffed out.

We shall now have a Committee on which all Welsh Conservative Members of Parliament will serve, along with nine Conservative Members representing constituencies outside Wales. No doubt they will sit in the Committee taking not a blind bit of notice of what is going on except to vote for the Government where necessary. The Government will thereby get their majority.

All that shows that, whatever consideration the Secretary of State had in mind when he spoke of adjusting and amending the form of the Welsh Grand Committee, it was nothing more than froth. Unles he is prepared to allow the Welsh Grand Committee to take a meaningful decision in an all-Wales context, and that Committee has a majority of Opposition Members, any tinkering will be meaningless. If he allows that, why is he not allowing Welsh Members of Parliament to have a real voice in the consideration of the Bill, which is specific to Wales more than anything else could ever be?

The Secretary of State may or may not be aware that 84 per cent. of my constituents speak Welsh as their first language. That is the pattern in some of the north-western and south-western parts of Wales. In other parts, such as Newport and Gwent, the percentage is small. The circumstances vary enormously from part to part and even within counties—for example, within Dyfed, between Ceredigion and south Pembrokeshire.

Mr. Rogers: So as to demonstrate the unanimity among hon. Members sitting on the Opposition Benches, will the hon. Gentleman agree that, in the Labour-controlled English-speaking areas of Wales, the greatest advances in the Welsh language have been made in the education system over the past 20 years, and that an enormous effort has been made in the development of Welsh schools?

Mr. Wigley: The hon. Gentleman will know that I have paid tribute before to people like Llew Heycock and the work that he did on the old Glamorgan county council. What he says is true of some Labour-controlled parts of the valleys. In other parts, it is regrettably not so true. For example, it is not as true of West Glamorgan as it is in Mid Glamorgan. He will know that from the demonstration that took place last week in the Eisteddfod. I hope that we shall see progress now in West Glamorgan.

The point is that circumstances vary greatly from area to area. That is what requires hon. Members from all parts of Wales, from Gwent and Gwynydd, and Clywd and Dfyed and every part within them, to serve on the Committee considering the Bill.

The feeling that has been expressed in Wales, across party boundaries and across the language divide, is that the Bill does not go as far as people had hoped it would. There are questions about status, about the way in which the Bill will impact on bodies that have been privatised or that will be privatised and about the way in which the langauge is used in the courts. Those are genuine

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arguments that need to be advanced in the light of the experience that comes from Rhondda, Cardiff, Swansea, Merthyr, Llanelli, Pembroke, Denbigh, Carmarthen, Newport and all around. Wales is a patchwork of different experiences; it is a whole network of small communities. Each of the voices representing them should be heard in the Standing Committee.

To stand heavy on the rule tonight is not just to gain a slight political edge for the Government's convenience over the next few weeks. They will undoubtedly get their way in any case. What is happening tonight is a portent of the Government's attitude. I put it to the Secretary of State, in the strongest but kindest way possible, that, if he is to play a constructive part in the future government of Wales—there is a vacant role for statesmanship in building the structure of government in Wales, both locally and at the all-Wales level—what is happening tonight is a singularly bad way to start off down that road. I appeal to him, even at this late stage, to think again and to put the interests of Wales first on this occasion.

9 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): I follow the excellent speech of the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) by posing this question to the Secretary of State —what would he lose by yielding to the overwhelming opinion of Welsh Members tonight? He would not lose anything of substance because, as he knows, on Report he could easily reverse any decisions with which he did not agree. Certainly, if he were to so yield it would be a symbolic gesture to the House that he was prepared to do his best to come into the tribe, to listen to the great consensus in our Welsh parties and not to try to impose some neo-colonialist view on us. I wonder whether, even at this late stage, he might ask himself, "Would I really lose anything by yielding? Would I not certainly gain something were I to show a willingness to listen?"

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on his speech. I say warmly and with sincerity that it was by far the best speech that I have heard him make in the House. It was extremely well researched and powerful. It is a tremendous credit to him.

The people of Wales wish the Secretary of State well. Why? It is because, whether or not we like it, he is the advocate of Wales in the Cabinet and if he does not do the right job for Wales we will all suffer. He did bring one welcome new quality—although only one—to the debate, and that was brevity. I wonder whether he will continue in that vein. I ask him and his colleagues to ask themselves whether, in the light of the overwhelming consensus against this procedural motion, they should not feel a little uneasy at what is being done tonight. It is wholly insensitive.

The right hon. Gentleman began his speech by saying that he is and has always been a unionist. However, certain things might be done in the name of unionism which would be wholly contrary to the interests of unionism. He will unite all Wales against him if he persists with this stubborn and obstinate course.

I wish to make two points about the motion. First, in my judgment the debate raises fundamental questions about the legitimacy and style of Government. I would be out of order were I to make the proper points about the lack of support in Wales for the governing party. The Government are, and will always remain, a minority in Wales, so it behoves them to deal with the affairs of Wales with constant and continuing sensitivity. Otherwise, the consequences will be counter-productive to the policies that they espouse.

There was great anger in Wales at the news of the right hon. Gentleman's appointment as Secretary of State for Wales. It was not because anyone had anything against him personally; with great respect, few knew him personally. He is known as a person of immense natural ability and intellectual stature, who served in the private office of the former leader of the Conservative party. However, the right hon. Gentleman has no experience of Wales. For him, Wales is wholly unknown territory.

It would be a great feat of imagination to comprehend the Secretary of State understanding the tribal emotions and sensitivity within Wales. At least his predecessors not only had personal contacts with Wales but were on the wet wing of the Conservative party. Therefore, their prejudices were more likely to be in the grain of Wales. The Secretary of State knows well that he comes with an image of being very much on the dry side of his party, against public expenditure and in favour of privatisation. All are policies that have no relevance to Wales and are likely to harm it.

All right hon. and hon. Members representing Welsh constituencies have something direct and relevant to say from their own experience, background, and occurrences in their own constituencies in relation to the Welsh language. Some will be denied the opportunity to make that contribution. That is anti-democratic. Right hon. or hon. Members representing Welsh seats will be denied——

Mr. Richards *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Anderson: Of course they will be denied that opportunity, because only a proportion of Welsh Members of Parliament will serve on the Committee. Welsh Members with something legitimate to say on the subject of the Welsh language will be denied that opportunity in Committee, during detailed consideration of the Bill—but there will be parachuted into the Committee people who have nothing to contribute and who will be there simply to ensure a Government majority.

Mr. Redwood: Does not the hon. Gentleman agree that the purpose of Second Reading, Report stage and Third Reading is to give just such an opportunity to right hon. and hon. Members who do not serve on the Committee to participate in deliberations on the Bill? In a large parliamentary party such as the Labour party, do not colleagues work together so that the best arguments and points are marshalled in Committee? That is the duty of a democratic Opposition and I look forward to receiving the benefit of that advice and of those viewpoints in Committee.

Mr. Anderson: I represent a unique constituency—Swansea, East—and would not want to delegate my views to any of my colleagues, however much I respect them. Also, I do not want to give the Secretary of State a constitutional lecture, but he knows that the Report stage may be relatively short and that there may or may not be a Third Reading debate. It will be in Committee that detailed consideration of all the important matters will be given. The Secretary of State is misleading the House if he thinks that, by excluding from the Committee a number of

Welsh Members of Parliament who have a proper interest in the Bill, he is advancing in any way democracy in Wales or the cause of unionism that he purports to espouse.

I am bound to concede that, in a unitary state, which we have, there will be occasions when the Government, because an item of legislation is essential, perhaps ideologically part of their programme, will insist that they have a majority throughout its progress. That may be true even of matters of particular relevance to Wales. They might include water privatisation, which figured largely in the Government's manifesto and which gives rise to clear party divides on an ideological basis.

The Bill in question is not one such piece of legislation. It is almost Wales against the rest. There is a considerable consensus in Wales on the Bill and that was shown by the fact that there was no Division on Second Reading. The Government cannot draw an analogy with water privatisation, where they must use their majority, juggernaut-like, to get it through.

Of course there will be differences, which will include such questions as whether the Post Office—or some other utility moving from the public to the private sector—should take with it the obligations placed on it under the Bill. If so minded, the Government could reverse such matters on Report. Far more important, however, is the fact that the only argument against imposing the "burden" of the Welsh language obligations on the private sector —including privatised utilities, and utilities that will move from the public to the private sector in future under the present Government—is that those obligations lay a burden on the industries involved which might deter investors and provide a disincentive for jobs in Wales.

If that is the Secretary of State's argument, let me give him my answer. First, we in Wales might see a different balance between economic interests and the interests of the language. Why not listen to the consensus that emerges from Wales? Secondly—this, too, is a fundamental argument—if retaining the language obligation on companies moving from the public to the private sector may put jobs at risk, should not we in Wales decide the matter, rather than having it imposed on us by an artificial majority in a Committee set up by the Government?

When Britain confronted countries in the old Commonwealth that sought to move from a colonial to an independent status, the cry from any of the old leaders was, "Please allow us the democratic right to make our own mistakes." If ours be mistakes—and I do not concede that they are—will not the Secretary of State and his Unionist majority allow us in Wales to debate the issues and, if necessary, "make our own mistakes"?

9.11 pm

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): I was going to address a few personal words to the new Secretary of State, but he seems to have disappeared for the moment.

If Standing Order No. 86 was designed to do anything, it was designed to accommodate precisely this sort of Bill. There is no clear party divide on the Bill; indeed, if we had the chance to establish a Welsh Grand Committee, we should discover a good many cross-party currents, and a good many differences and nuances in where each of us would stand on any issue. It is absurd to table a motion such as this in relation to a Bill for which the Standing Order was perfectly designed way back in 1907. Why not give the chemistry of the Welsh Grand Committee a chance to work? I do not believe that a Whip would be imposed: even the Opposition would not dare to impose one—certainly not with me on the Committee, because I have my own views about the balances and sensitivities involved in a Bill of this kind.

Sadly, I fear that there will be a party political divide if we consider the Bill in an old-fashioned Standing Committee of the kind that we have all suffered—and, at time, enjoyed—when party lines are drawn. Inevitably, if the Government draft in ill-assorted Conservative Members, the aggro will start and the Committee will be diverted to party battles. There is no place or reason for such battles on a Bill such as this. There could be discussions within our parties and also cross-party debates.

Has the Secretary of State for Wales read the debates on the Bill in the other place? They are the saddest debates that I have read for a long time. Lord Cledwyn, Lord Prys-Davies and Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas did not advocate radical change. They did not make huge demands on the Government to change the Bill. Theirs was modest and moderate advocacy. However, the reply of the fourteenth English earl, Lord Ferrers, a Minister of State, Home Office, was absolutely wooden and insensitive, although the points made to him by many Members of the other place had been put sensitively to him.

That shows why this House should handle the Bill in a different way. We do not want a repetition of what happened in the other place: wooden responses from Ministers, backed up by members drafted on to the Committee for no reason other than that they have to fill it up and form the majority.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): I rise to defend the speeches made by my noble Friend in the other place. They proved sufficiently satisfactory for the other place to divide only once.

Mr. Rowlands: The Minister of State has been around for too long. There is a civil service appointment of permanent under-secretary. There is now a permanent Minister of State in the Welsh Office. This is a new creature. Footnotes to British constitutional practice will be written, based upon the Minister of State's tenure of office.

I led a deputation from Aberfan and Merthyr Vale. I shall not go into the details, but Lord Ferrers is one of the politest men I have ever met. The women in that deputation left the meeting shaking their heads. They did not believe that such people still existed. The Minister of State tempted me into making that observation, but it is true. The Government's defence in the other place was put forward by the fourteenth English earl. His reply suggested that the Government had handed us a great gift; how dare we ask for more?

We cannot afford similar debates in our Committee stage. There are certain debates where the party lines are drawn—for instance, on the Welsh economy, education and so on—and where the outcome of the debate, if not the vote, is known. In this case, we genuinely do not know the outcome of the debate. If I am given the chance to serve on the Standing Committee—although I should love to serve on a Welsh Grand Committee—I should welcome the opportunity to find out where we stand on the way that the Welsh language will be promoted and developed.

According to the 1991 census, in communities such as mine, only 8 per cent. of the people speak the Welsh language. However, 15 per cent. of the younger generation speak Welsh. All sorts of interests could be debated. That will not happen, however, in a Standing Committee of the kind that the Government want to force upon us.

Why not have a Welsh Grand Committee? Why not let the chemistry of that Committee work? If the Government do not like the outcome, they have the power, on the Floor of the House, to reverse the Committee's decisions on Report. However, they would at least have to defend the reversal of those decisions, unlike the sad and sorry story in the other place.

9.19 pm

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in the excellent debate in which many of my hon. Friends have made telling speeches. There has been a terrific consensus between the 32 of the 38 Members of Parliament with Welsh constituencies and perhaps some sympathy from one or two Conservative Members, although they have been noticeably quiet today. We have heard only one intervention from the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards). As usual, the Conservatives do not have the courage to defend the Government. The Government are taking away the democratic right of hon. Members who represent the various communities in Wales to defend and strengthen the law on the Welsh language.

I echo briefly the congratulations and good wishes extended to the new Secretary of State. We know of his background, academic prowess, ability and vision, but I hope that he will temper the latter during the next few months or years in the Welsh Office. I hope that he will try to reach a consensus, because he will find that in Wales people want to work together for the benefit of all. If he can work with the grain rather than against it, we shall revise our opinion of him in due course.

The great democratic deficit in Wales is shown up at every general and local government election. Wales is overwhelmingly left of centre, which causes problems under the rules of the House when it comes to setting up the Standing Committee. However, the interpretation of Standing Order No. 86 is clear—we should all have the right to participate in discussions about the unitary authorities when local government is reorganised and about the Welsh language. The counties of Wales all have very different linguistic backgrounds, and all 38 of us should have the opportunity to articulate our views. However, the Committee is to consist of 19 Welsh

Members of Parliament and, in addition, nine English Members who will not be able to understand the problems facing a minority language in an overwhelmingly English culture. It is clear that the English Members are merely Lobby fodder for voting.

At the most recent sitting of the Welsh Grand Committee on 8 March in Cardiff, the then Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Wirral, West (Mr. Hunt), made it clear that he wanted to strengthen that Committee's powers. Two or three times in his speech, and in an intervention on my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), he almost threw down the gauntlet to us, asking us to help him strengthen the Committee's powers to make up for the democratic deficit. It is therefore very disappointing to learn that the Committee will be pushed to one side when we come to debate the Bill which deals with an issue that is overwhelmingly Welsh.

Last year, there was only one sitting in Cardiff, whereas there are usually three or four. I believe that the Bill and any discussions on unitary authorities should be dealt with by the Welsh Grand Committee.

9.23 pm

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): I echo the welcome given to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. Change is very stimulating. We have been lucky to have had a succession of excellent Secretaries of State for Wales. Although I am sure that all of us who are prepared to be open minded are sorry to lose David Hunt——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should refer to the right hon. Member for Wirral, West.

Mr. Sweeney: I am grateful, Madam Deputy Speaker. I meant my right hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, West (Mr. Hunt).

It is an opportunity for a fresh approach. Labour Members have cast aspersions about the credentials that my right hon. Friend brings to the task that faces him. That demonstrates the arrogance of the left in politics, and especially the arrogance of the left in Wales, where there seems to be an assumption that only left-wing politics can be good for Wales. I am quite sure that my right hon. Friend will prove them wrong.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): Does the hon. Gentleman regard it as left-wing arrogance to suggest that the wishes of voters should be taken into account and should be reflected in the composition of the Committee?

Mr. Sweeney: Of course I do not. The wishes of the voters are being reflected in the composition of the Committee. It would be strange if the principle, which is commonly followed throughout the political system, that the party in government should have a majority when important decisions are to be taken were not followed in this case. The Welsh Affairs Select Committee, where there is also a built-in majority for the Conservative party, set that precedent. Conservative Members on the Welsh Affairs Select Committee who do not represent Welsh constituencies make an important and valuable contribution.

The hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) suggested that it would be impossible for hon. Members representing constituencies outside Wales to recognise the importance and contribution of minority languages. The hon. Gentleman cannot have been present when my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) spoke when this subject was last before us. My hon. Friend made an excellent speech in which he showed his understanding of how the Cornish language had fallen into disuse.

It is important to have a good debate in Committee. I am sure that the three Labour Members who serve on the Welsh Affairs Select Committee feel that they are not denied any opportunity to express their views and that they have no difficulty in doing so. I am sure that other Labour Members, who are not members of the Welsh Affairs Select Committee, have no difficulty in communicating to their colleagues and ensuring that their views are reflected.

I had not intended to speak this evening, but in reaction to what has been said by Labour Members, I felt that it was important to say that I strongly support my right hon. Friend tonight.

9.28 pm

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): This debate is of great importance to some of us, although from the faces of Conservative Members, it seems to be a bit of a game for them. The debate is important to Labour Members because it brings together two specific elements. First, it is proposed to overturn a Standing Order that has been in existence since 1907, which was put there to measure and to safeguard the uniqueness of Wales in the unionist structure.

The second element is the issue of the language. If there is anything that makes us in Wales feel in some way different—there is nothing wrong in being different—it is that the Welsh language exists and that many people speak it. I say that as a non-Welsh speaker. I am very proud to have been part of the process of retaining and developing the Welsh language as a county councillor, with the late Lord Haycock, who, as leader of Glamorgan county council, was responsible for establishing Welsh language schools in south Wales. If it were not for people such as Lord Haycock, the Welsh language would have gone completely. Since then, many other local authorities have contributed to the language in south Wales in particular.

Many colleagues in the Labour party have supported the development of the Welsh language, because we think that it is important. The two issues come together tonight, and they are of fundamental importance to us. I say to the Welsh Conservative Members that there are precedents for people who sell out their country, and, quite frankly, if they support the motion tonight they will be selling out Wales. They will sell out the language and the uniqueness of Wales—for whatever trivial purpose that they may construct. I do not know whether the Whips are putting pressure on the Welsh Office, but the Welsh Office ought to have enough guts to stand up to the Government Whips on this issue. The Conservative party and the Welsh Conservative Members are selling out the language and selling out Wales. They ought to have enough guts to vote against the motion tonight.

9.32 pm

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): We have heard many a fiery speech from Opposition Members tonight. That shows both the passion and the emotion with which the language has been and is regarded in Wales.

I refer in particular to the speech of the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) and the assessment of the legal position vis-a-vis Standing Order No. 86. I was disappointed to see that he was reading "Erskine May" earlier, because if the Government's position turns out to be true, "Erskine May" is irrelevant. That is the crux of the matter.

This is the most important Welsh measure of the century. I echo the words of many Opposition Members who, although they are not Welsh speakers, have an equal stake in its development and an equal emotional attachment to the language. The language is at the very heart of the Welsh people. It is the true meaning of us as a people, and of our difference—"vive la difference" as was said earlier.

The suspension of Standing Order No. 86 is in my view an insult to Welsh Members. This is not a political football, thank heaven. Only one hon. Member on Second Reading debased the argument and turned it into a political free-for-all. That hon. Member has left the Chamber following his two minutes' worth. That is nothing new.

The matter is not a political football. I am sure that every Welsh person of every political colour should be able to respect the language and do his best to nurture it. The Secretary of State said earlier that he hopes that there will be a consensus in Committee—that the whole point of the Committee is for the exchange of views for the building up of a consensus. If that view is true, why should Standing Order No. 86 be suspended? What is the point in that?

The suspension is an insult to our constituents. It is an insult to us as hon. Members representing Welsh constituencies, as was the fact that the Secretary of State last week went to Swansea on one of his visits—probably his second to Wales—but declined to make the 10-minute journey to the Urod national eisteddfod. That is the jewel in the Welsh crown and the largest youth festival in Europe. He did not want to go. That is how interested he is in the Welsh culture, and no doubt in the subject that we are debating.

The Secretary of State must listen to what is said by Opposition Members. We represent the whole of Wales and we do not have a short-term political view of matters. We represent the people of Wales and we have their interests at heart. Their interests will be denied by the suspension of Standing Order No. 86. I believe that the Secretary of State has made the worst possible start and I trust that he will change his mind.

9.34 pm

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West) *rose*——

Mr. Alex Carlile: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I want to raise a point of order about the motion which I would hope to put helpfully in the form of four questions, the first of which relates to the motion itself. Is it a motion for the amendment, repeal or suspension of Standing Order No. 86? The House is entitled to know whether it is such a motion.

If it is such a motion, what is its nature as such? With respect, it looks to me as though it might be a motion for suspending Standing Order No. 86, at least by implication. It certainly cannot be a motion for amendment or repeal.

If it is a motion for suspension of Standing Order No. 86, is it in a proper form? It does not say in the text that it is a motion to suspend Standing Order No. 86. If it is such a motion, has the requisite notice been given in accordance with the usual practice of the House?

Finally, if this is not a motion to suspend Standing Order No. 86, the House is entitled to know whether it is in order for us to pass a resolution that purports to override the proviso contained in paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 86.

I submit that the answer to my first three questions can be encapsulated briefly in the sentence, "No, this is not a motion to suspend Standing Order No. 86." If I am correct in that regard, how on earth can it be in order, without such a motion, for the Government to seek to pass a resolution which does indeed purport to override the proviso in paragraph (2)?

Madam Speaker: To some extent, the hon. and learned Member answers his own question. It is not a motion to suspend Standing Order No. 86. However, the motion is of course in proper form because if it were not I would not have accepted it for debate this evening.

Mr. Carlile: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker, if I may be permitted another brief go.

If it is not a motion to suspend Standing Order No. 86, how, without such a motion, can the House effectively dispose of the proviso in paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 86, which appears to be an overriding proviso governing the membership of Standing Committees relating to Bills which concern only Wales?

Madam Speaker: When hon. Members consider the motion on the Order Paper, they have to determine for themselves how they interpret it. I have told the hon. and learned Gentleman and the House that the motion is in a proper and acceptable form. Therefore, hon. Members must decide for themselves whether it is acceptable or unacceptable. They must then divide the House accordingly.

Mr. Martyn Jones *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Gentleman raising a pont of order? *[Interruption.]* I am sorry. The hon. Gentleman was rudely, or perhaps not so rudely, interrupted earlier.

Mr. Jones: I was interrupted in a very gentlemanly way, Madam Speaker. I want to speak on the issue for a couple of minutes as I was unable to attend the Second Reading debate because I was away on a Select Committee visit.

The issue is of such importance that all hon. Members within Wales should have the right to speak on it. By the turning over of Standing Order No. 86, the six Conservative Members for Wales will sit on the Committee as of right while fewer than half the Members representing the majority party in Wales—the Labour party—will sit on the Committee. That cannot possibly be fair. To ignore the Standing Order is an insult to Wales. It is comparable to the change in unitary authorities, which ignores the fact that we need a regional tier of government for Wales.

I shall not speak at length, because we have had much debate. All contributions have been made by the Opposition, apart from one small intervention by a Conservative Member. That shows the depth of feeling within Wales, within the majority party in Wales, and among the majority of Welsh Members.

We have now finished weeks of debate on Maastricht, much of which was about subsidiarity. We have an opportunity for the Government to put subsidiarity into practice on this issue. Can we not do that? I join right hon. and hon. Members in welcoming the Secretary of State to his new position. I hope that he will choose to follow the advice of my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) and put subsidiarity into practice and give Welsh Members of Parliament the right to discuss this item of Welsh business.

9.40 pm

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): I advise the Secretary of State that I am disappointed that my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) referred to the debate which occurred in 1907. My direct predecessor, Reginald McKenna, who was then President of the Board of Education, moved the Standing Order. It now falls upon myself and my right hon. and hon. Friends to defend the Standing Order. It has been continuously in force ever since that date and it has certainly stood the test of time. Except for today and last year in respect of the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill, it has never been the subject of controversy, challenge or debate.

True, of course, it has been set aside by Government motions—the Secretary of State has indicated that—in respect of specialist and technical Bills such as those in respect of Caldey island and Conway tunnel and, in 1975, the Welsh Development Agency Bill, and the Development of Rural Wales Bill in the following year. However, those circumstances were wholly different from the circumstances that we are considering today.

The move was never challenged in the 1970s. It was carried through by a system of consensus and agreement. If anything, the then Labour Government were helping the then Conservative Opposition to have better representation on the Committee. There was no conflict between what is and was a Labour Wales and a Labour Government. As my hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) said, the proportion of Welsh Members of Parliament who considered those Bills was about 14 out of 16. Today we are considering only 19 out of 28. That involves bringing in reinforcements—English Tory troops—to top up the Committee.

Another point that has not been mentioned is that, back in the 1970s, many Labour Members of Parliament were also Ministers. It would have caused considerable difficulty had they served on the Committee. The most significant point that the Secretary of State made was that he absolutely rests his case on his interpretation of the Standing Order. However, we know that the provision that all Welsh Members of Parliament deal with Bills which are exclusively Welsh overrides everything else in that Standing Order. That is the crux of the issue.

What makes the Government's attitude so eccentric and bizarre is that there is considerable consensus on the Bill in Wales. My hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) and others referred to that point. There is an incontrovertible case for all Welsh Members to take part in the detailed consideration of the Bill. It affects every part of Wales and every constituency in Wales.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen said, it does not matter whether 60 per cent., 70 per cent. or 80 per cent. of people in his constituency speak Welsh or whether only a small number in my constituency in Gwent speak Welsh. We all have a right and a part to play in deliberations on the Welsh Language Bill because of the burgeoning of Welsh-medium education, interest in the language itself and all the different attitudes that exist. Each of the 38 constituencies in Wales has a story to tell with regard to the Welsh language and its consideration by the Committee.

Mr. Redwood: If there is this enormous fascination with the Bill, as I hope there is, why was it that only six Labour Members wanted to speak on its Second Reading? Why did other Members representing Wales not take advantage of that opportunity to make their speeches? Why is it that only half the Opposition Members for Wales have turned up for this important debate? Tonight is an opportunity for debate. Where are those hon. Members?

Mr. Murphy: I do not think that this is the time or the place for the Secretary of State to talk about the number of hon. Members who have taken part in the debate. It was only by accident that the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney) decided to speak.

Mr. Sweeney: It was certainly not an accident. I had every intention of being present.

Mr. Murphy: The hon. Gentleman said that he never intended to make a speech in the first place, but perhaps his speech was not accidental.

The Second Reading dealt with the principles of the Bill, which commands much consensus and agreement. There is an awful lot of difference, however, between Second Reading and the detailed consideration and scrutiny of the Bill in Committee. That is the time when every hon. Member representing Wales should be involved, and quite properly, in its consideration. Hon. Members who represent England may speak on Report. Two such Members spoke on Second Reading; one because his mother came from Aberavon, the other because he wanted to talk about Cornish. They can speak again on those matters on Report, but not—it is important to stress this—in Committee on the Welsh Language Bill.

The real reason for today's debate is that the Government are simply afraid to entrust the Bill to a Committee in which they cannot guarantee a majority. Their behaviour is a combination of arrogance, uncertainty and panic. That was spelt out in the debate in 1907 when a Conservative Member said:

"The representation of Wales is, for the most part, in the hands of one party."

He meant the Liberals; today it is in the hands of the Labour party. Another Conservative Member said:

"It would be impossible for a Unionist Government"—

an interesting phrase, given what the Secretary of State said—

"to entrust legislation to Grand Committees . . . because no Government would consent to send legislation to Committees on which they were in a minority."

If the Secretary of State had told the House that that lack of a majority is the chief reason for his decision not to send the Bill to a Committee consisting of every Member

[Mr. Murphy]

representing Wales, we would at least have understood the politics of that. The right hon. Gentleman has come up with the nonsense about the Standing Orders not providing proper or evident reason for sending the Bill to such a Committee.

Despite the pitfalls and the holes in which the Government have got themselves in the past few weeks, they are highly unlikely to fall over a minor defeat on a minor amendment to the Welsh Language Bill in Committee. Even if they did, they would, of course, change the Bill on Report. Have they completely lost their confidence that they cannot trust hon. Members representing Wales to deal with a Bill concerning the use of Welsh language in their own country?

The previous Secretary of State attacked the concept of devolution many times during and before the election. I am sure that the present incumbent will follow that practice. The former Secretary of State argued that he did not want devolution because the procedures of the House were such that there was no need for it. He said that we had the Select Committees, the Grand Committee and Welsh Question Time and asked why we wanted devolution. On 8 March in Cardiff he said:

"In Wales, we have always considered ways to improve the structure of government . . . The government of Wales evolves constantly.

I propose that I, as Secretary of State for Wales, should invite all the party leaders in Wales to discuss how the Grand Committee could develop, and to present ideas about how to proceed."—[*Official Report, Welsh Grand Committee*, 8 March 1993; c. 2-3.]

This is the first opportunity that the House has had to consider such matters since March, and what a consultation and answer the Secretary of State has now given us. He has decided to bypass the Welsh Grand Committee to deal with the most consensual Bill on Wales to emerge for a decade. There was no vote on it on Second Reading, yet the right hon. Gentleman has still decided that that Grand Committee and all hon. Members representing Wales cannot deal with this Bill.

Compare that attitude with what is happening north of the border in Scotland. At least the Secretary of State for Scotland has issued a White Paper, "Scotland and the Union: a partnership for good" in which he set out that he intends to enlarge the powers of the Scottish Grand Committee to consider legislation. He suggests that there should be Special Standing Committees that can take oral evidence on Bills. Would not that have been a good idea for the Welsh Language Bill? The Secretary of State for Scotland talked about those changes as emphasising the important role of all Scottish Members of Parliament.

What a contrast such an approach makes with the grudging, laggardly approach of the Welsh Office and Welsh Ministers. They have not changed since the debate in 1907, when the opponents of Standing Order No. 86 said that they thought that it would lead to the break-up of the Union. Even the Minister of State was not present in 1907, but had he been there, he would certainly have been a Liberal. As the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) said, no Tories were returned in 1905.

Another speaker in the 1907 debate said that behind the proposals of the Prime Minister lay a process for devolution. Would that that had been the case—instead of all the Government attempts to override the rightful position of Welsh Members of Parliament, there would have been a proper Welsh Assembly in Cardiff to deal with the issues and consider the importance of the Welsh language.

The abandonment of the modest Standing Order on a Bill that attracts support from both sides of the House is typical of a Government who reduce the role of anyone elected in Wales and choose, instead, to govern Wales on the basis of unelected, unrepresentative quangos. The Government are so terrified of any debate or criticism that they cannot allow Welsh Members to consider a Bill that has support in every part of the House. I suspect that few measures this Session will so graphically and vividly show up the weakness and continued arrogance of the Government, and I urge the House to vote against the motion.

9.52 pm

Sir Wyn Roberts: On behalf of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, I thank the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) for wishing him a few years in office *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Caerphilly looks at the *Official Report* he will see that he did so. Those good wishes were echoed by the hon. Members for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) and for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley). I must not forget the good wishes of my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney).

As I listened to today's debate it seemed that there was still some confusion in the minds of Opposition Members about why the motion is absolutely necessary. That confusion prevails in spite of the clear reference in the speech by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the inconsistency contained in Standing Order No. 86. It simply is not possible to constitute a Committee that satisfies all three criteria of the Standing Order—a Committee that reflects the composition of the House, includes all Members representing Welsh constituencies, and does not exceed 50 members. However one tries to form such a Committee, one of those requirements will not be met.

Mr. Ron Davies *rose*——

Mr. Alex Carlile *rose*——

Sir Wyn Roberts: I shall not give way as I want to deal with the various issues raised.

The hon. Member for Caerphilly said that he had taken advice and been told that the representation of Welsh constituencies was the most important of the three requirements. However, that advice holds good only in so far as it is endorsed by the House. I am sure that that is right.

Mr. Ron Davies: The independent, authoritative advice given by the Clerks of the House is that paragraph (2) overrides all other provisions—that is, the one conferring on all Welsh Members of Parliament the right to participate in the Committee. I hope that the Minister will accept that he is asking the House to judge between the Clerks' advice and his exercise of voting powers in the Lobbies. If the matter is to be tested by political division, of course he is right. Our argument is that, on any objective basis, the logic and proof of the past 86 years stands.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The hon. Gentleman has not answered the question about the precedents, which are undeniable. I refer to the Welsh Development Agency Act

1975 and to the Development of Rural Wales Act 1976, which was passed by a Labour Administration. The circumstances do not matter; motions similar to this one had to be agreed. By the end of this evening the House will have expressed its will that there should be a Committee as established by this motion.

Mr. Alex Carlile: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I regret having to say this, but the Minister of State has clearly stated that Standing Order No. 86 is inapplicable to any Bill relating solely to Wales, because, he says, it is impossible to apply it to the present membership for Wales. That being so, is not the proper course for the Government to table a motion to amend or suspend the Standing Order, not to fiddle about and cheat their way around it as they are attempting to do?

Madam Speaker: It is for the Minister to explain precisely what he means. I hope that that is what he is about to do—if he is given an opportunity.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The motion is quite clear: it begins with the words:

"notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 86",

and it goes on to describe the kind of Committee that should be established.

I remind the House that the motion relates to a Government Bill. I may not have been around in 1907, but I did read the debate to which the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) referred. It was the then hon. Member for Ashford who rightly said that no Government would consent to sending legislation to Committees on which they were in the minority.

The hon. Member for Caerphilly tried to tempt us into setting up a Committee in which we did not have a majority with the promise that only reasonable amendments would be tabled. Whether we could agree about what was reasonable is open to question, however. He said that we could correct what we thought wrong on Report. That is not a serious proposition for a Government Bill

Mr. Wigley: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Will you now give the House a ruling on whether the Government motion is, in your view, an attempt to suspend Standing Order No. 86?

Madam Speaker: The motion before the House is in order; otherwise, as I said earlier, it would not have been placed on the Order Paper. It is for Members of the House to decide the issue. I am sure that, if the Minister is allowed to pursue his case, he will explain precisely what the motion means, so that Members can decide for themselves on the issue.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We are absolutely clear that, as this is a Government Bill, we should have a majority on the Committee.

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Wyn Roberts: No, because I have less than a minute left.

We are quite convinced that this is the best way to deal with the Bill. There is no suggestion that the Government should not have a majority in Committee and, of course, the Committee will represent the composition of the House. We could have had a smaller Committee but its size will ensure representation for the minority parties.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business),

That, at this day's sitting, the Motion relating to the Welsh Language Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

Question agreed to.

Question again proposed.

Mr. John Morris: The Minister spoke about the Welsh Development Agency Act 1975 and the Development of Rural Wales Act 1976 and said that they were precedents. I was the Minister in charge of that legislation and my recollection, which has been assisted by that of my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), is that the procedure followed then was to facilitate and assist the Opposition. It was not a precedent. I was generous in advising those who were in charge of the proceedings of the House. It is quite wrong to regard assistance for the Opposition as a precedent for what the Government intend to do.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I accept the right hon. and learned Gentleman's description of the circumstances surounding that legislation. I dare say that special circumstances attached to the Development of Rural Wales Act 1976 as well. That was implied by the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy). There have been cases since then, and it is an established fact that no Government can process their own Bill in Committee without a clear majority.

I welcome the fact that there will be English Members on the Committee. I also welcome the participation on Second Reading of my hon. Friends the Members for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant), for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) and for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney). The presence of English Members on the Committee will reaffirm the fact that the Bill was promoted by the United Kingdom Government in support of the Welsh language, which is part of the British heritage as well as that of Wales.

Mr. Alex Carlile: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I apologise for raising another one. You have listened with obvious attention to the Minister of State, who has explained with his usual care the thinking behind the motion. You always take great pains to protect the interests of Back Benchers. The motion, if passed, would exclude half the Welsh Back Benchers from membership of the Standing Committee, despite the provisions of Standing Order No. 86(2)(ii).

The right hon. Gentleman has made quite clear what the Government are trying to do. He said honestly, as always, that Standing Order No. 86 is completely unworkable in present political circumstances in connection with any Bill that relates solely to Wales. He told us, by corollary, that what the Government seek to do can only be to suspend the operation of Standing Order No. 86, not in so far as it relates to the House in general but in so far as it relates specifically to Wales. That is akin to introducing a new Standing Order.

If that is what the Government wish to do, surely the protection of Back Benchers and the good procedure of the House demand that the Government should table the appropriate procedural motion. I invite you to rule as to

[Mr. Alex Carlile]

whether this is, de facto, an attempt to suspend Standing Order No. 86 and, if it is, that the Government should table a procedural motion to that effect.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is an experienced advocate, but he must not try to interpret to me what the Minister has said. I listened carefully. I have also explained that the motion is in order. Therefore, it is for hon. Members, Ministers and Back Benchers alike, to determine, after what they have heard, how they should vote in the Division. If they wish to pursue the matter further, there are parliamentary channels open to them to do so.

I have no alternative now but to put to the House the motion on the Order Paper, as I am required to do.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 275, Noes 243.

Division No. 258] **[10.05 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl)*
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry

Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heppell, John
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stratford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Dennis Turner and
Mr. Alan Meale.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Ordered,

That, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 86 (Nomination of standing committees), any Standing Committee appointed for the consideration of the Welsh Language Bill *[Lords]* shall consist of twenty-eight Members, including not fewer than nineteen Members sitting for constituencies in Wales.

European Community Documents

Madam Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to European Community documents.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees).

Common Transport Policy

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 11011/92 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Transport on 1st April 1993, relating to the future development of the Common Transport Policy; notes that the emphasis on completing the Single Market and ensuring that it works properly, on subsidiarity, and on the promotion of sustainable mobility consistent with the principle of freedom

of choice, is in line with the Government's aims; and looks forward to considering further proposals arising from the White Paper in due course.

CARBON ENERGY TAX

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 7018/92 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memoranda submitted by HM Treasury on 4th February 1993 and the Department of Environment on 14th May 1993, relating to carbon dioxide emissions and energy, SEC(92) 1996, relating to the energy consequences of the proposed carbon/energy tax, 8328/92, relating to co-operation between public utilities and auto-producers of electricity, 4182/93, relating to limitation of emissions of certain pollutants into the air from large combustion plants, 7847/92 + COR1, relating to limitation of carbon dioxide emissions through energy efficiency (SAVE programme), 7757/92, relating to promotion of renewable energy resources (ALTENER Programme), 7569/92 and 5705/93, relating to monitoring mechanisms for carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions, and 7157/92, relating to limitation of carbon dioxide emissions and improvement of energy efficiency; and supports the Government's intention to ensure that the Community's action in these fields continues to take full account of United Kingdom interests.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

Question agreed to.

Statutory Instruments, &c

Madam Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

RATING AND VALUATION (SCOTLAND)

That the draft Alcan Aluminium UK Ltd. (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 11th May, be approved.

That the draft Caledonian MacBrayne Limited (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 11th May, be approved.

That the draft Forth Ports plc (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 11th May, be approved.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

Question agreed to.

Law and Order

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

10.19 pm

Mr. David Evans (Welwyn, Hatfield): I am disappointed to find it necessary to take up your time, Madam Speaker—and the House's time—to bring to the attention of a Conservative Government the current problem of law and order. In my view, that problem has been caused by a succession of weak-kneed, pathetic Home Secretaries—not least the immediate past incumbent, the present Chancellor of the Exchequer.

I will not detail the many examples of the lack of will demonstrated by those Home Secretaries; I will simply remind hon. Members of the scandal surrounding the lawlessness of criminals on the roof of Strangeways prison. Night after night, we had to witness on television the humiliation of the prison service, the police and—even more important, in my opinion—the law-abiding citizens represented by the Government and the Home Secretary of the day, who categorically refused to take the action for which the circumstances cried out. Those criminals should have been given 10 minutes to get off the roof, then a police marksman should have been told to knock them off one by one.

We are told that borstals are to be up and running in three years' time; but my constituents want to know what we are going to do with these thugs at this moment. They want to know what will happen this afternoon, not what will happen in three years.

In recent years, the chattering classes—especially that lot opposite—have generated new concepts, the effect of which has been to complicate and fudge previously simple and widely supported principles.

Let us take the concept of security. I have always believed in the uncomplicated principle that the fundamental duty of any Government is to defend and protect their citizens: they must punish lawlessness to provide security. In the real world, evil, if it is allowed, will spread like wildfire. Security is about fighting fire with fire. It is a basic fact of life that some people only understand the language of force. To provide effective security, Governments must deter crime with the threat and, where necessary, the use of force.

In the international arena, Conservative Governments have successfully followed the simple rule of security. It was a Conservative Government who sent British troops in to protect the Falkland islands; it was a Conservative Government who deployed British troops in the Gulf to teach Saddam Hussein a lesson; it was a Conservative Government who prevented the Communist bloc from transgressing the iron curtain with the threat of nuclear weapons. Despite all the whingeing and whining of the CND crackpots on the Opposition Benches, we stayed loyal to the tried and trusted principle of security, and, naturally, our way prevailed.

In the international arena, Britain is a world leader in security. Sadly, that basic principle has not been adopted in the domestic arena; instead, our policy on crime has been hijacked by a bunch of woolly-jumpered, woolly-tongued do-gooders who come up with increasingly complex terms and theories. They sound persuasive and feasible on the surface, but in reality they are slowly but surely leading us to anarchy.

These silver-tongued softies would like us to believe that a law breaker is not a criminal, but a victim of society who should not be punished—God help us. The little yob has rights: he should be counselled and cosseted. The bleeding hearts have bent over so far backwards to protect the criminal that we have ended up with a social revolution on our hands. The results speak for themselves. We are now in a crazy situation: burglars and violent thugs merely receive cautions, while a young lad is jailed for whistling at a girl.

The brother of the boy jailed for whistling—a Mr. Wayne Posell—is reported to have asked:

"Has British justice gone mad?"

He added:

"How can my brother be sent to jail for whistling when drink-drivers and violent criminals are fined peanuts or let off with a few hours community service?"

The answer is that we have allowed our crime policy to be fudged by those who live in a world of pink candyfloss: they would not know a criminal even if he bashed them over the head with a copy of *The Guardian* and drove off with their 2CVs.

I shall not linger on the subject of car theft, as I know that it is a bit of a sore point with the wriggler from Monklands, East, the Leader of the Opposition, who recently had his chauffeur-driven Rover stolen. As Oscar Wilde might have said, to lose one's car is unfortunate, but to lose one's chauffeur-driven car is bloody ridiculous.

My constituents feel far from secure. A wave of violence and theft has engulfed the country, and them. They feel that the Government have not done enough to tackle the problem. I agree. Crime has risen constantly since the second world war, in times of boom and bust. We have had a succession of Home Secretaries who have merely tinkered with the problem. They have allowed themselves to be bamboozled by the flashy terminology and complex theories of the do-gooders.

I hope that the new Home Office Ministers realise that community sentences have not only failed to tackle the problem but have increased it, by pursuing a conscious policy of diverting more and more hardened and serious criminals away from custodial services and instead placing them on community sentences.

By allowing these criminals to mix with young and naive first-time and petty offenders, the Government have created the wrong kind of role models for these impressionable youngsters, who will view these hardened and persistent offenders as living proof that they will not be punished if they carry on offending. Rather than a deterrent, community sentences are effectively encouraging youngsters to pursue a career in crime.

Do not get me wrong. I am not advocating a policy of throwing every criminal into prison [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] Well, for a start, it would cost the taxpayer a fortune, and for what? So that some law-breaking scoundrel can lounge around in a cell eating three meals a day—with access to television, games areas and a holiday camp atmosphere—and can have plenty of time to plan his next crime as soon as he is let out. Where is the punishment? Where is the deterrent?

The Minister no doubt saw the article in the *The Sunday Telegraph* on 2 May. This is what it said:

"Are you enjoying your porridge?"

The article followed a circular that was sent to all prisoners, issued by the Home Office. Some of the questions included were:

"Is your supply of underwear adequate? Is the prison canteen sufficiently well stocked? Is the midday meal served at the right time? Is the food up to scratch? Is the prison clean enough, or is it dirty? Is it too hot, or too cold? Is it too noisy? Is it too quite?"

That says it all. Then there are complaints that two in a cell is too many. I think that two in a cell is not enough. There should be more to a cell. And if they spend 23 hours locked up in a cell, so what?

I hope that the Home Office will take heed of the public outrage. Community sentences are merely tinkering with the problem. They have been tried and tested, but they have failed. The alarming rise in crime tells us that many in our society believe that crime pays. Forceful measures are the only solution to this sickening spiral of lawlessness. We must return to the basic principle of security, where one must deter evil with the threat of force and, when necessary, with the use of force.

Take the recent case of a young mother who was waiting in broad daylight for a bus in the Holloway road, one of London's busiest thoroughfares. Three black men bundled her into a car at knifepoint, took her to a cemetery, beat her unconscious and then raped her. What would be the use of locking up these animals at a cost to the taxpayer of £20,000 per year per prisoner?

The only way to punish them is to ensure that they wish they had never committed a crime and guarantee that they could never do it again. The solution is castration. It would make the streets safer overnight. Such animals would think twice before doing it again. I am sick to death of the whingers who churn out nonsense about corporal punishment undermining the dignity of the individual. Who cares about the dignity of a beast? What about the dignity of the victim?

A few weeks ago, two teenagers—Paul Chapman and Philip Barber—were given prison sentences. Chapman received 10 years for rape and Barber received eight years for abetting. They attacked Ethel Denyer, a 76-year-old spinster, while she was lying in her bed. She was repeatedly stabbed with a toasting fork, beaten with a chair leg until it snapped, throttled, punched and kicked. She was then raped. Chapman and Barber got away with £26. Ethel Denyer later died from the ferocity of the attack.

Neither boy has shown a trace of remorse for the evil deed. Within an hour of the attack, the pair were seen laughing and joking in a kebab shop. During their three-week trial, they sat sniggering in the dock. What about the dignity of Miss Ethel Denyer? Those boys should have been flogged or cat-o'-nine-tailed—that would have wiped the smirks off their faces. They should have been castrated. Some people fail to grasp the fact that we are dealing with dumb and violent beasts who respond only to the law of force. Those two animals will be out of prison in five years, robbing and raping once again.

Some people argue that capital punishment is never justified as it violates the human right to life but, without a death penalty, there is no effective way to distinguish a crime such as theft from a crime such as cold-blooded murder. Let us take the case of the ruthless murderer, John Edwards. In April this year, 22-year-old Maria Turvey was taking her seven-month-old daughter, Charlene, for a walk in the Fairley Hill estate in Luton. Edwards jumped out of a van, seized the baby from the buggy and threw her into the back of the van. He shot Mrs. Turvey in the head with a shotgun and later shot baby Charlene. Mother and baby were murdered by a maniac with a gun. Edwards

[Mr. David Evans]

should not be given a prison sentence which he will spend lounging around with petty thieves. He should be hanged. All murderers should be hanged.

The new Home Secretary has a history of supporting capital punishment, although I read only last week that —surprise, surprise—he is reconsidering his position. I hope that he is not to be added to the long list of Home Secretaries who funk the issue. I hope that he has the strength to overrule his Home Office bureaucrats and wishy-washy advisers and to return capital punishment to the British legal system. It would mark a triumphant return to the simple principle of security in the domestic arena, where criminals would be left in no doubt that, when they contemplate a murder or participate in acts such as armed robbery, which so often tragically result in death, their own lives are on the line.

I have concentrated on the need to deter and punish crime. However, it is also important to identify and understand the origins and causes of crime. I believe that the problem we face today originates from a breakdown of discipline in society. Too many parents pay too little attention to their children. As a result, housing estates are littered with children roaming the streets long after dark, engaging in petty theft and vandalism and making a general nuisance of themselves. Why? Because their parents could not give a damn about where their children are or what they are up to.

I wish to thank my hon. Friends the Members for Dartford (Mr. Dunn), for Dover (Mr. Shaw), for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold), for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman), for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland), for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates), for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) and for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) for supporting me in this debate on law and order.

Finally, on behalf of my constituents of Welwyn and Hatfield, I do not want a wishy-washy, civil servant, Home Office reply to the debate. I should prefer the Minister to go away and then come back to tell the British people that the Conservative Government have the will and the heart to look after their citizens in a way that they can take for granted, which enables them to go out at night, safe in the knowledge that they will not be mugged, raped or murdered; and that, on returning to their homes, they will find them as they left them and not, as so often happens now, find them ruined by someone whom the police have little or no chance of apprehending. I ask the Minister, are we going to protect our citizens—yes or no?

10.34 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Maclean): Yes, we are. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) on raising the very important issue of law and order tonight. I am glad that he put his points across in his customary forthright manner, because he is articulating not just what his constituents say, but what the constituents of most hon. Members and millions of ordinary people throughout the country say. I have never seen the House so full for an Adjournment debate. That is a measure of the concern felt, certainly by Conservative Members.

Crime and the fear of crime are rightly at the forefront of the public mind. It is essential that we give such an important issue our sustained attention and action. We are concerned about rising crime. Crime is, of course, rising in all western nations; it is not a uniquely British problem. Thankfully, violent crime is only 5 per cent. of all recorded crime. Some of the recent increases are due to more people reporting crimes that were previously hidden because we have encouraged them to do so. These are facts.

My hon. Friend and all our constituents want to know what action we intend to take against those who threaten their lives, their families, their properties and their right to move freely about this country. I shall tell them, but I shall first briefly state some of the things that my predecessors have done, because my predecessors deserve credit.

First, since 1979, we have increased the police force by 16,500 policemen. More officers are being put back on the beat. Since 1983, more than 6,300 officers have been released for other duties by bringing in civilian staff. Since April 1991, we have opened 12 prison establishments, creating 6,994 prison places. We have given the courts power to pass longer sentences to protect the public from violent and sexual offenders. We have increased the maximum penalties where we have found them to be inadequate.

We have, for example, increased the maximum penalty for child cruelty from two years to 10 years, and the maximum penalty for trafficking in hard drugs from 14 years to life. For attempted rape, we have increased the maximum penalty to life imprisonment. We have acted against the so-called "joyriding" offences, introducing tough new penalties under the Aggravated Vehicle-Taking Act 1992. The Criminal Justice Act 1988 enables the Attorney-General to take action against excessively lenient sentences. We have also given the courts power to confiscate the assets of drug traffickers and people convicted of other profitable crimes.

I say to my hon. Friend that all those actions are part of our strategy to bear down heavily on crime and to protect the innocent. The Government's commitment to taking action has been demonstrated by the plans announced by my predecessors to act against those who offend on bail, to deal with persistent juvenile offenders, to amend the sections of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 that have caused so much public concern and to raise the maximum penalty for causing death by dangerous driving and drink-driving.

The protection of the public, the detection and punishment of offenders and the prevention of crime will continue to be a top priority of this Government, of this Home Secretary and of this Minister of State. Tonight I take the opportunity to state my approach in tackling the problems of lawlessness in society.

It is my profound belief that the honest citizen is entitled to a decent country in which to live and that it is the Government's duty to bear down hard on crime. People are crying out for Britain to be made safe for decent people. I intend to ensure that the system is on the side of the law-abiding, the honest and the decent. I tell my hon. Friend that I shall listen to the opinions of ordinary people who are afraid of crime and the victims of crime before I listen to the sociologists in their woolly jumpers with their theories on offenders.

I do not want the police to become demoralised because the young offenders whom they catch time and time again are walking free and putting up two fingers to justice. We shall ensure that persistent young offenders who have not responded to community supervision do not walk free in future.

The House will be well aware of our plans to protect the public from those young criminals and their crimes. I can tell my hon. Friend and the whole House that the necessary legislation will be introduced at the earliest opportunity to give the courts the power to sentence the hard core of persistent young offenders to a new secure training order.

We must give the criminal no hiding place. We will ensure that the neighbourhood watch schemes are re-energised so that no criminal is safe walking down any streets. I want people working in partnership with the police and volunteering to be part-time special policemen and police officers so that every part of the country is covered by the eyes and ears of the vast majority of good, decent, honest citizens.

Let us have no political nonsense about surveillance cameras being Big Brother. In public areas, they can help cut crime, and the public want more cameras and less crime, not the other way round. I therefore welcome the wish on the part of some local authorities to use surveillance cameras. They should not be deterred by concerns over the use and storage of tapes. I will address those concerns if they are genuine, because I do not want anyone to have an excuse not to use such cameras.

Just as the criminals must have no hiding place, so I believe that we, the honest decent citizens, must come out of our hiding places. Why are we the ones hiding behind locked doors, afraid to go out? We can come out of our hiding places by confronting crime, reporting crime and helping the police.

I particularly liked the words of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis at the end of last week. Talking about Operation Bumblebee, he said:

"I want the burglar to start being frightened rather than the law-abiding citizen. I would like it to be the burglar who will be running scared, not ordinary members of the public. It is time for London to fight back."

I say that it is time for all of us to fight back and we can start by backing the police and working in partnership with them, supporting them in their effort to protect our communities. If crime prevention is to be effective and long-lasting, we must all, as parents and neighbours, play our part.

My hon. Friend called for hanging, flogging and castration—though not necessarily in that order. He knows my views. Personally, I regret the fact that the House rejected capital punishment by a large majority in 1990, but I must tell my hon. Friend honestly that I can see no prospect of the present House of Commons changing its mind, and that there is no point in engaging in a further debate on that issue in this Parliament.

Corporal punishment also runs contrary to article 3 of the European convention on human rights—I know that that will not be good news to my hon. Friend—and it would be a fruitless exercise to try to reintroduce it. Of course, it is still right and proper for parents to administer reasonable corporal punishment to their children if they so choose.

Action against crime must involve a criminal justice system that is seen to deal effectively with offenders. In the very near future, we shall be tabling amendments to the Criminal Justice Bill, which is in Committee at the moment, that will let magistrates and judges have full access to the past record of criminals. The courts can properly punish and deter only if they have the full criminal history and know whether or not criminals have responded to past sentences. That news will be welcomed by all Conservative Members.

We shall also table amendments scrapping the over-restrictive unit fines system, which certainly did not work as anticipated. Our proposals will require magistrates fully to consider the means of an offender when imposing a fine, but will not contain a statutory mechanism for calculating the fine. It will be for magistrates to make full use of their discretion in determining the most appropriate fines in individual cases.

We shall fulfil our manifesto commitment to get tough on those who persistently commit crimes while on bail for other offences, by inviting Parliament to agree to amend the Criminal Justice Bill to give the courts a statutory power to increase the length of sentence for someone who offends on bail. That was a particular concern of my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope).

We are determined to see such offending reduced to the lowest level possible. A prosecution right of appeal against the grant of court bail provides another important safeguard, and in that context, I note the good progress that my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) is making with his Bail (Amendment) Bill, which is now in another place.

This tough action will probably result in more people in prison. Full prisons are of course a problem, but so are the empty streets because honest people are too afraid to go out. It should be the criminals who should be hiding behind locked doors, afraid to go out because they will be caught, or unable to get out because they are already in prison.

I hope that I have given my hon. Friend tonight a flavour of the approach that I shall bring to this job. He knows that there are no easy solutions and that crime is constantly changing and evolving as criminals become ever more devious or brutal in the way they operate. That is why we must constantly make changes in our approach and try to get one step ahead of the criminals.

I congratulate my predecessors in the Home Office on the action they have taken. If my predecessor as Member for Penrith and the Border, Lord Whitelaw, had not launched the biggest prison building programme and police recruitment drive this century, we would, to put it bluntly, be in queer street right now.

As criminal behaviour changes, so our responses will change. However, the one thing that will not change is my determination to strengthen the position of the innocent and of the potential victims and victims. We shall do that by listening to them and by hearing what they have to say. After all, they are our constituents—and the only reason that we are here. It is about time their voices were heard.

As we introduce these new measures to take tough action on all aspects of law and order, I look forward to the continuing robust support of my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield, and of all my hon. Friends, in the Division Lobby.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at fourteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 8 June 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

HEALTH

Drug and Alcohol Misuse

1. **Mr. Connarty:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she last met representatives of organisations providing residential drug and alcohol projects to discuss the change in community care.

7. **Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will review specific funding arrangements for services to drug and alcohol abusers.

The Minister for Health (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): Representatives of organisations providing residential services for alcohol and drug misusers, and from local authority associations, last met my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and the then Under-Secretary of State for Health—my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo)—on 15 December 1992. We have undertaken to monitor the implementation of the new arrangements closely.

Mr. Connarty: I am grateful to the Minister and glad to hear that he has been meeting those organisations. Does he share my concern at the report in *Care Weekly* of 3 June that only £10 million has been identified by local authorities for use in respect of residential alcohol and drug cases? Had the sum been ring-fenced as the Government supplied it directly, it would have been £16·5 million. That means that there is a £6·5 million shortfall in funding for those vital services. Will the Minister do something to rectify the position?

Dr. Mawhinney: I have to tell the hon. Gentleman that the amounts were ring-fenced. He suggests that they should have been ring-fenced within a ring fence, which does not make a lot of sense. We have issued special guidance, which we drew up with the local government associations, telling local authorities that we attach a high priority to those groups. It is for local authorities individually to assess their needs and proceed accordingly.

Ms Eagle: The Minister will not need reminding of the link between drug misuse and the increased threat of HIV and AIDS infection. Does he agree that the shortfall in funding indentified by my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty) has already increased anxiety about that? Would the Minister care to comment on the persistent rumour that the Government intend to announce—[HON. MEMBERS: "Another rumour."] Another rumour. I want to give the Minister a chance to deny that rumour, if hon. Members will let me proceed. Would the Minister like to comment on the persistent rumour that the Government intend to end ring fencing for AIDS services in August next year, thus putting health at risk?

Dr. Mawhinney: Like the hon. Lady, we attach importance to the fight against drugs misuse. That is why this year we made more than £24 million available in connection with drugs misuse services—an increase of more than 20 per cent. on last year's figure. It is why we have allocated £19 million this year, which is a 10 per cent. increase for service development. It is why we have increased by 90 per cent. the amount of money that we have made available to fund the expansion of pharmacy-based needle exchange schemes. The hon. Lady will know that, in her own constituency, the Wirral drug prevention team is undertaking many activities, all of which are designed to reduce drugs misuse.

Mr. David Atkinson: Does my hon. Friend agree that the county councillors who were elected as social service representatives on 6 May should now be fully aware of the community care needs of the areas that they represent—including the needs of alcohol and drug addicts—and to whom the excellent voluntary organisations ought now to be making representations?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend is, of course, absolutely right. Ultimately, it will not be the decisions of Ministers that are primarily addressed to the individual needs of alcohol and drug misusers but the decisions of those who have the legal responsibility—the local authorities.

Mr. Hinchliffe: The Minister now has sitting beside him the new Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), who, in the past, has actively campaigned for the ring fencing of funds for drug and alcohol projects. I remind the Minister of some of the problems that are arising across the country as a direct result of the Government's about-turn on the ring fencing of funds for such projects. Many important projects are now faced with closure. There are people on the streets who have serious problems and cannot get help, there are allegations that at least one person has died as a direct result of the Government's policy. Will the Minister address the problem urgently and reinstate the original ring-fencing arrangements?

Dr. Mawhinney: What I will do is extend the hon. Gentleman's question to a welcome to the new Under-Secretary of State for Health, my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis). The hon. Gentleman is aware that we have made much more money available for the implementation of care in the community than even he, in his wildest moments, fantasised that the Government would make available—£140 million more.

We have made that money available so that local authorities can undertake personal assessments of individual need and so shape services designed to meet those needs—some in residential homes and some in other ways. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will continue to support that broad principle with us.

Assessment Procedures

2. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received on the workings of the assessment procedures introduced under the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990; and if she will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. John Bowis): From the information available, the new arrangements seem generally to have got off to a good start. We have established a monitoring system to ensure that the policy objectives are met. We have received a number of representations on the workings of the assessment procedures and will consider carefully any suggestions to improve still further those processes.

Mr. Rowe: It is a pleasure to see a former director of community affairs at the Dispatch Box for the first time and I warmly welcome my hon. Friend to that position. Does he agree that the new assessment procedures have, as part of their merit, the great advantage that they make it easier for care managers to assess the amount of care and to budget rather more precisely for the delivery of that care? If that is the case, why is the Department so anxious about the possibility of extending direct payment to those clients who are deemed to be best served by it?

Mr. Bowis: From one former community affairs director to another, I thank my hon. Friend for his kind remarks and I express my gratitude to the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) for having read my collected speeches.

We are all aware of the stout work that my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) has carried out with Lord McColl in respect of this research and debate. His aims, like ours, are to ensure that patients have a much greater say and are much more involved in planning for their needs. My hon. Friend will accept that at the moment we need to ensure that the new community care reforms have time to settle down, bearing in mind that social security has traditionally been the route for cash and social services the route for services. If my hon. Friend continues to debate, I will continue to listen and perhaps we can look to the future together.

Mr. Redmond: I, too, congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his appointment. Will he instruct all chairmen appointed by the national health service to answer questions from right hon. and hon. Members? Some chairmen refuse to answer questions. Will he request that they answer them?

Mr. Bowis: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his initial comments. Perhaps he can draw to my attention any particular problems that he experiences. I believe that we want openness in the development of our policy. In so far as Ministers are responsible, we will respond and in so far as local health authorities are responsible, they will respond, as will local social services departments. Openness is important and I am glad to know that at least the hon. Gentleman basically supports the aims and objectives of our policy.

Immunisation

3. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made immunising against childhood diseases in the Trent region.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): The childhood immunisation programme has been an enormous success. At February 1993, Trent region had uptake rates of 94 per cent. for diphtheria, tetanus and polio immunisation, 91 per cent. for whooping cough and 93 per cent. for measles, mumps and rubella.

Mrs. Knight: Will my hon. Friend join me in congratulating all the general practitioners in Trent region on that very successful programme? Has not the GP contract also played a part in that success? However, is my hon. Friend aware of the somewhat erratic supply earlier this year of the mumps, measles and rubella vaccine to the Southern Derbyshire health authority, which covers my constituency of Erewash? Can he assure me that there will be no further interruption in the supply of that very important vaccine?

Mr. Sackville: My hon. Friend will be aware that two vaccines were withdrawn last year, which caused difficulties, particularly in her area. I understand that those difficulties have now been sorted out. I should like to join her in congratulating the local GPs who responded magnificently. Since the Hib vaccine was introduced last year, haemophilus influenza has reduced by 70 per cent. and whooping cough is rarely seen in the surgery. Since 1989, no child has died as a result of acute measles-related diseases.

Mr. Ashton: Is it any wonder that there is a shortage of vaccine when Trent regional health authority can spend £200,000 with a public relations firm to cover its tracks on the Beverley Allitt case? Why has that taxpayers' and health service money been spent when there will be an inquiry in private? Did the Secretary of State for Health agree to spending that £200,000? If so, why has she accepted that there will be a private inquiry?

Mr. Sackville: That is a decision for the region. The important thing is to get the facts with the minimum of disruption to the professionals involved and to the institution, and the qualifications of Sir Cecil Clothier are impeccable for that task.

Psychiatric Beds

4. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many beds have been closed in psychiatric hospitals over the past 10 years, with the effect of releasing how many patients into the community; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: The average number of beds available daily for mentally ill people fell from 85,000 to 50,000 between 1981 and 1993-92. It is not known how many patients have been discharged into the community over that period. Our policy is to enable people with mental health problems to be able to be supported in their own homes for as long as that is desirable and possible, while recognising that there will always be people who require hospital care—some of it long stay.

Mr. Greenway: Madam Speaker——

Mr. Foulkes: Declare your interest, Harry.

Mr. Greenway: My interest is my constituency of Ealing, North. My concern is that people should not be put back into the community from psychiatric institutions without proper preparation for that and without proper housing. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Of course, that applies to some Labour Members. Will my hon. Friend give an assurance that no one will be discharged or put back into society without proper preparation? That is damaging to the individual when it happens and most worrying to neighbours and/or members of the community where it happens.

Mr. Bowis: My hon. Friend's notable battles on behalf of Ealing undoubtedly led partly to the opening last year of the new £10 million mental health unit by the Ealing health authority. I assure my hon. Friend that our policy is that no one will be forced to leave a mental health institution unless and until the community is ready to receive him or her. We have the care programme approach in place that ensures that community services, including treatment and housing, are ready to receive an individual and that a key worker is in place to guide that person. I hope that my hon. Friend will be satisfied with that assurance.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Is not the Minister shocked by the appalling ignorance of his Department in not knowing how many people have left mental hospitals and gone into the community? Since the Department does not know how many people have left, how can it know what sort of monitoring and care exists for those who have left? It is a disgraceful answer. I hope that the Minister will look at the matter seriously because it is of grave concern to people all over the country.

Mr. Bowis: I think that the hon. Gentleman misunderstands what a discharge is—a discharge is not necessarily a person leaving a hospital once and for all. The number of discharges does not relate to the number of people because some people go into hospital more than once. The statistics are there for local use and local planning. The important point is that locally the district health authority will ensure that people do not leave hospital unless and until there are facilities in the community to receive them.

GP Fund Holding

5. **Mr. Merchant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to extend the GP fund-holding initiative.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): GP fund holding has shown itself to be an outstanding success, bringing many benefits to patients. There will be more to come. As the controller of the Audit Commission recently said,

"fund holding is leading the way, with many imaginative innovations which are good for the health of the population."

One in four of the population now benefits from having a fund holder as his or her family doctor. With the numbers preparing to join the scheme from next April, we expect that figure to rise to one in three.

Mr. Merchant: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, for the reasons that she has given, the fund-holding initiative has proved to be particularly popular with both doctors and patients, as illustrated by the practice of Dr. Kenneth Scott in my constituency? Does she agree that one of the most important priorities now must be to ensure that the smaller practices are able to benefit fully from the fund-holding initiative? Would she care to tell the House what steps she is taking to enable that goal to be achieved?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is right. I am delighted to hear about the progress in his constituency. We should like to see more fund holders across London because they can pioneer new ways of helping patients. The challenge now is to extend the benefits of fund holding to as many general practitioners as possible and to encourage the creation of groups, consortiums and management arrangements. About 70 groups already operate and about 150 are likely to come through for next year.

Mr. Grocott: Is it too much to hope that the Secretary of State will consider the overwhelming evidence that the fund-holding system leads to a two-tier system for patients? Will she look at the evidence that I have sent to her on the issue? Even for this Government, is it not indefensible to treat people not on the basis of their medical need but sometimes on the basis of whether their GP is a fund holder or a non-fund holder? As the Government have made so many U-turns on so many issues, is it too much to hope that they will make one on fund holding?

Mrs. Bottomley: The Labour party likes to centralise control over all decisions. We believe in devolving responsibility. The general practitioner is the advocate for the patient. Fund holding enables GPs to back their decisions with money so that they can pioneer care that is closest to patients' needs. There are clear guidelines on common waiting lists and a requirement that the treatment of patients of fund holders should not disadvantage the patients of other general practitioners.

The real point is that all general practitioners should have the advantage of fund holding. The task now is for all general practitioners to use leverage through fund holding or by working with the district health authority as the purchaser to achieve continual improvements in the quality of treatment for their patients.

Mr. Allason: Does my right hon. Friend see a parallel between the opposition expressed by some general practitioners some time ago to generic medicines and the opposition that was experienced recently to fund holding? Is she aware that in the Torbay constituency the GP who was virulent in his opposition to fund holding is now a fund holder? Does she agree that the opposition that we saw to generic medicines and fund holding has vanished? Is not that an endorsement of the policy?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend exactly characterises the position. Time and again, I meet fund holders who were initially cautious about the scheme but now say that it has profoundly redressed the previous balance of power in the health service. We believe in a health service in which patients, not institutions, come first. The general practitioner is the advocate on behalf of the patient. Once again, we see the Labour party promoting a sneering campaign of denigration which shows its hallowed principle of equal misery for all. It does not like excellence.

Mr. Burden: Would the Secretary of State care to consider the case of Dr. Zuckermann in my constituency, who referred a patient to a local orthopaedic hospital and received a reply that the patient could not be seen until January next year? He then received a telephone call saying, "Sorry, we did not realise that you were a fund-holding general practice. We can see the patient in four to six weeks." The hospital got it wrong because Dr. Zuckermann is not a fund-holding GP. Does not that prove that fund-holding GP systems are about queue-jumping and creating a two-tier health service?

Mrs. Bottomley: There are clear agreements with the profession about the way in which fund holding operates. The answer for the general practitioner involved is either to become a fund holder—*[Interruption.]* I am pleased that in Birmingham, where there are many singlehanded practices or two-handed practices, there are several schemes to encourage them to form fund-holding practices. Alternatively, the answer for the general practitioner is to work with the district health authority to get the purchasing improvement that the fund holders are establishing.

Once again, the hon. Gentleman fails to recognise the dramatic achievements in reducing waiting times for everyone. We have now established a maximum waiting time for all hip, knee and cataract operations, so the length of time anyone waits for treatment is substantially less than it was in the long distant past when the Labour party was, regrettably, in power.

Patients Charter

6. **Mr. Mark Robinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the implementation of the patients charter waiting time guarantee in the South Western region.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Latest provisional waiting time figures show that the South Western regional health authority has been extremely successful in meeting the waiting time commitments in the patients charter. In line with the patients charter, no one in the region has had to wait for more than two years for any in-patient or day case treatment, or 18 months for hip or knee replacement or cataract operations.

Mr. Robinson: I am sure that my right hon. Friend knows that, five years ago, 13,500 people in the south-west were waiting for more than one year. I hear a rumour that that figure is down to 300. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that figure? Does she agree that it shows the effectiveness of hospital trusts, such as the East Somerset hospital trust? Does not it give the lie to some of the myths being peddled by the Liberal Democrats and others in the south-west?

Mrs. Bottomley: I can confirm the rumour. Of course, the south-west has an excellent record of delivering on patients charter commitments, but across the country there have been dramatic falls in waiting times. Last year, for example, there was a fall of 24,000 in the number of people waiting for more than a year—almost a third—so the figures are the lowest ever. I am pleased that my hon. Friend paid tribute to the East Somerset trust, because there has been a great deal of investment in it. Like others, it is solving its problems and pioneering ever-higher standards of patient care.

Ms Primarolo: The patients charter is wholly irrelevant to the real needs of patients, whether in the south-west or the rest of the country. While the Secretary of State has been concentrating on the time people wait in out-patient departments to see a doctor for non-urgent operations, one in 10 cardiac patients is dying while waiting for treatment. Children needing emergency beds in intensive care are being turned away from hospitals. Today's report in the *Daily Mirror* of the death of a young girl——

Madam Speaker: Order. This is Question Time and I require a direct question to the Secretary of State.

Ms Primarolo: The question is that the report in the *Daily Mirror* today of the death of a young girl follows on from a report that the Secretary of State has on paediatric care——

Madam Speaker: Order. If the hon. Lady would put——

Ms Primarolo: I am going to.

Madam Speaker: No, not going to. The hon. Lady will put what she has to say in the form of a question.

Ms Primarolo: The Secretary of State has a report. Will she confirm that a quarter of paediatric intensive care beds are closed because of underfunding? Will she now make an emergency statement to the House that children who need emergency treatment will not be turned away from the national health service?

Mrs. Bottomley: So far as I know, the question is about the South Western region. It is typical of the Labour party, with its shroud-waving approach to health care, that it should seek to use a question on the South Western region to refer to that other case. It is certainly a tragic case and all of us would greatly sympathise with the family involved. An investigation is under way by the British Paediatric Association into intensive paediatric care. Once its report is published we will certainly make it available and see what necessary action should follow.

Perhaps the Labour party might grudgingly be prepared to recognise that today is also one on which a dramatic fall in cot deaths has been reported. The gentleman who pioneered the work on cot deaths comes from Bristol and the hon. Lady might have wished to pay him credit, given that he comes from the south-west. We are also seeing improvements in child health as a result of the immunisation programme.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Since the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) introduced, quite improperly, another hospital authority in her question, may I set the record straight? There have been no cuts in intensive care paediatric beds in Manchester or Liverpool. The young girl who died so tragically——

Madam Speaker: Order. Much as I am interested in what the hon. Lady has to say, she must put a question. If not, we shall move on.

Dame Kellett-Bowman: Madam Speaker, I was doing as you did—reprimanding the hon. Member for Bristol, South for mentioning a different region——

Madam Speaker: I am the umpire here.

Pharmacies

8. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her estimate of the numbers of pharmacies which are at risk of closure during the next three years.

Dr. Mawhinney: Community pharmacies are independent commercial businesses. We have made no estimate of the number that might close, or open, in the next three years, as such events could be affected by a variety of factors.

Mr. Hardy: Is the Minister aware that the present policy will mean that a large number of pharmacies will be severely penalised and that many hundreds are now imperilled? Is he also aware that, as a result of that policy, enormous additional burdens will be placed on family doctors in less well-populated areas? Since the Government purport to care for rural England, will the Minister ensure that that policy is reconsidered in the interests of rural communities?

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. That is not the consequence of the policies that are currently being pursued. I believe that the hon. Gentleman is referring to the negotiations that are now being undertaken between officials in the Department and representatives of the pharmacists. Those negotiations are proceeding constructively. We are seeking to replace indiscriminate subsidies to pharmacies with payments related more closely to professional services. The hon. Gentleman will find that the Public Accounts Committee has strongly endorsed that strategy. May I also assure him that we are committed to protecting the essential small pharmacies to which he referred.

Mr. Sims: Does my hon. Friend accept that it is just as important that pharmacies should be easily accessible in suburban areas as in rural ones? Does he also agree that patients could make fuller use of their local pharmacy for health care? There is a great potential for pharmacists to play an increasing role as part of the local primary health care team.

Dr. Mawhinney: As is so often the case, my hon. Friend is absolutely right. We attach importance to maintaining essential small pharmacies not only in rural areas, but in suburban ones, particularly isolated pharmacies, perhaps on housing estates where people live at some distance from the main shopping centres. I assure my hon. Friend that it was precisely because of the current negotiations with the pharmacists that we have recognised that they have a value-added health role to play in offering professional advice and that we are, as part of those negotiations, looking to introduce a professional allowance for them.

Mrs. Mahon: The Government's policy affects the business of pharmacies. Does the Minister agree that any savings generated from a cheaper contraceptive pill could lead to more unwanted pregnancies and terminations as well as affecting the business of those pharmacies? The cost of one termination is £270 to the NHS, the cost of 10 years' supply of the contraceptive pill, so surely that is the economics of the madhouse.

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Lady's second question falls outside the scope of the main question. On her first question, I agree that hon. Members attach importance to maintaining an effective provision of pharmacies and the health advice that pharmacists can give. Over the past 10 years, the number of pharmacists has increased by 9 per cent. and the total number of pharmacists has increased by 13 per cent. Our desire to emerge with a stronger range of pharmaceutical advice for the constituents of all hon. Members forms part of our negotiations with the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee.

Mr. Cormack: Will my hon. Friend do everything that he can to publicise the figures that he has just given to the House? Is he aware of rumours sweeping Staffordshire and other parts that the Government have evil designs on pharmacists? Will he unequivocally state that that is not the case?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend is right—there have been suggestions in places further afield than Staffordshire that the Government have some sort of hidden agenda to close pharmacies. That is not true and I give that categorical assurance. I would deplore any attempt by anyone to try to gain advantage during the negotiations by scaring members of the public unnecessarily.

Elderly Patients

9. **Mr. Kevin Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what increase there has been in the emergency admissions for elderly patients over the last two years; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Between 1991-92 and 1992-93, there was a 6·9 per cent. increase in the number of non-elective admissions of patients aged 65 and over.

Mr. Hughes: Is the Minister aware that the reason for that increase in admissions is the fact that more and more admissions are turned down by hospitals that are trying to operate in the market forces world of medicine which the Government have introduced? The only way in which some general practitioners can gain admission for elderly people is to dial 999 after the patients have already been turned down by hospitals.

Mr. Sackville: I am well aware that there have been complaints from general practitioners in the hon. Gentleman's district about Tickhill Road hospital. I am also aware that Doncaster Royal and Montagu are taking steps to ensure that all elderly patients are admitted locally. If the hon. Gentleman thinks, as do many other Labour Members, that provision can be measured by the number of beds, and if he ignores advances in day surgery and medicine and other improvements which mean that more people can be better treated in fewer beds, he knows nothing about what is happening in the health service.

Ms Lynne: Does the Minister accept that a crisis is looming for elderly patients due to the closure of many geriatric beds and hospitals and the underfunding of community care? Does he accept that we could see a number of elderly patients on the streets in the same way as we have seen mental health patients on the streets?

Mr. Sackville: May I correct the hon. Lady—community care is extremely generously funded. If there are insufficient places for elderly people, the hon. Lady should address her remarks to the provider, the local social services.

Market Power

10. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to control abuses of market power in the NHS.

Dr. Mawhinney: There is no evidence of abuse of market powers.

Mr. Cousins: Does the Minister recall that last year in my constituency an experimental and brilliant way of delivering long-term rehabilitation had to be stopped because the bigger providers would not allow it? Does he know about Hertfordshire, where purchasers are strangling the hospitals? Does he know that nurses are on the streets of Newcastle today defending their hospital against the bigger providers who are trying to strip the services? If the Minister is not willing to act, why will not he let the Monopolies and Mergers Commission into the national health service to sort out the abuses and ensure that there is fair play?

Dr. Mawhinney: I will tell the hon. Gentleman what I know about Newcastle. The average general practitioner list size has decreased by more than 6 per cent. I know that the number of child health surveillance patients treated has increased by more than 10 per cent. I know that the number of minor surgical procedures has increased by 164 per cent. What I understand, but the hon. Gentleman does not, is that the health service is not confined to hospitals. It also extends into the community and primary care. The record in his part of the world is as good as it is in the rest of the country. People understand that they do not have to spend time in hospital when treatment and care are frequently available to them in their homes. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would welcome the fact that more day surgery is available to his constituents so that they spend less time in hospital. I have news for the hon. Gentleman—that is what his constituents would prefer to do.

Mrs. Roe: Does my hon. Friend agree that the implementation of the national health service reforms has been a great success, resulting in the treatment of more patients, shorter waiting times and better patient care? I congratulate him on taking the reforms forward, particularly in the development of purchasing. Will he give an assurance that that vital work will continue and that we shall not be deflected by Labour party scaremongering?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Last year, we treated, in terms of general and acute patients, 13·5 per cent. more than we treated in the year before the reforms were introduced. My hon. Friend will be pleased to know that activity in trusts last year was 7·6 per cent. higher as against 4·5 per cent. in directly managed units.

I can certainly offer my hon. Friend the assurance she seeks. We are moving to the next phase of the reforms, which is to increase and improve purchasing arrangements in this country. Purchasers are the advocates and agents of patients and it is their responsibility to see that an increasing amount of service, and increased quality of service, is made available to patients.

Rev. Martin Smyth: The Minister will agree that while improvements have been made in the national health service, we have not reached heaven yet. So let us return to the question and deal with the abuses. Is not it an abuse for a major pharmaceutical company to use its front-line position to bring pressure on small wholesale chemists to turn them into agents of the company? Is not it an abuse for a health authority to refuse to purchase good-quality services at reasonble cost, thereby trying to shut out a provider?

Dr. Mawhinney: I must tell the hon. Gentleman, as he would expect, that it is for purchasers to determine how they best achieve value for the large amounts of money that are available to them for purchasing good-quality and extensive health care for those for whom they are acting.

The answer to the first part of the hon. Gentleman's supplementary question is that he obviously has a specific example, of which I am not aware, in mind. He might care to bring it to the attention of my noble Friend Lord Arran, who has responsibility for those matters in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Does my hon. Friend agree, given that the health service is available to patients free at the time when they need it, that it is in their interest that market forces should operate in the system, that there should be competition between providers and that there can be competition between purchasers? Will he welcome our right hon. Friend's comments about encouraging private sector money into the health service, for the overall benefit of NHS patients?

Dr. Mawhinney: Yes, indeed. My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is totally spurious to suggest that the Government must choose between being caring on the one hand and being concerned for efficiency and-cost effectiveness on the other. It is in the interests of patients that we run the health service as efficiently as possible. In that way, more patients are able to be cared for and treated with the record amount of resources that are now being made available.

Mr. Rooney: Is the Minister aware that one of the four suppliers of sterilised theatre packs in Britain, Southrim Autoclave Ltd., is in my constituency? Is he further aware that the trust running Leeds general infirmary has placed a contract worth £250,000 direct with a Dutch company without even inviting any of those four British companies to tender? Is not that an abuse of the use of market forces?

Dr. Mawhinney: Purchasers have a responsibility to make the best possible arrangements they can for those on whose behalf they are acting.

NHS Patients

11. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of patients treated in NHS hospitals receive their treatment *(a)* immediately, *(b)* within a month and *(c)* within a year; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Half of all admissions are immediate. Of those who do wait, 44 per cent. are admitted within four weeks and three quarters wait for only three months. As a result of our initiatives, 98 per cent. of patients are admitted within a year.

Mr. Fabricant: Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is excellent news and is a true vindication of Conservative policy in reducing waiting lists? On the subject of waiting lists, would she care to speculate on how

long Conservative Members will have to wait for Labour Members to make up their minds on their policies for the national health service?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is exactly right. We have delivered remarkable reductions in waiting times and a record fall in one-year waiters and we have substantially reduced the average length of time that people must wait, both in my hon. Friend's constituency and elsewhere. During this time, as my hon. Friend rightly says, health has been a policy-free zone for the Labour party. The Opposition are still contemplating their navels in respect of their relationship with the trade unions—and it was ever thus.

Mr. McCartney: When this Government talk about waiting lists we get lies, damned lies and then the Secretary of State. Waiting lists are at a record high and nearly 1 million people are on them. Since the Prime Minister came to office, 1,500 people a week have been joining the waiting lists. Why does not the Secretary of State publish waiting times for first out-patient appointments? In all parts of the country people are waiting up to two years just to get appointments to see consultants. That means that many patients are waiting for up to four years for treatment. When will the Secretary of State act on that?

Mrs. Bottomley: The success of the patients charter has been such that there have been dramatic falls in waiting times and the average times that people have to wait for in-patient care have fallen. Moreover, we are now setting out-patient waiting time targets and they will be published. Not only will they be met: I expect that, like our other waiting list targets, they will be beaten. The patients charter provides a written constitution of the health service and people in the health service have been delivering these targets for better patient care.

It is high time that the Labour party gave some credit to all the doctors, nurses and others in the health service who have worked so hard for patients.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 8 June.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. McKelvey: Did the Prime Minister have an opportunity in the course of his very busy day yesterday to have a look at Scotland's national newspaper, the *Daily Record*, which carried an article stating that the former Chancellor claims that the Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister alone, was responsible for imposing VAT on fuel? Did he impose it on his own; and will he answer without waffle?

The Prime Minister: The answer to the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question is that in the course of my busy day I certainly did not read the *Daily Record*. The answer to his second point is that the House of Commons imposed the VAT by its vote.

Mr. John Carlisle: Is my right hon. Friend aware that a head teacher of a school near my constituency, having received a salary increase that had been denied to several thousand other citizens, wrote to the Secretary of State for Education telling him that he could stuff his pay rise? If head teachers take that attitude and use that sort of language, is it any surprise that they are denying 14-year olds school tests which they themselves would probably fail?

The Prime Minister: That is an unusual position to adopt on pay rises and not one generally taken by head teachers or by anyone else. I very much regret that there is difficulty carrying these tests forward. They are very much in the interests of the children and it is in the interests of the testing system, which the head teachers support, that the tests should go ahead this year so that Sir Ron Dearing can deal with the difficulties with them.

Mr. John Smith: Can the Prime Minister tell the House why Ministers in his Administration have seen it as part of their duty as Ministers of the Crown to intervene on behalf of Mr. Asil Nadir, a person charged with serious offences and now a fugitive from justice?

The Prime Minister: I am glad that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has given me the opportunity to correct a misassumption in his mind. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office has explained that he raised certain matters with the Attorney-General following an approach from a constituent of his who was then an adviser to Mr. Nadir. My hon. Friend was originally approached 18 months ago, before he became a Minister, and it is perfectly proper within the "Questions of Procedures for Ministers" that Ministers are free to make their views about constituency matters known to the responsible Minister, either by interview or in correspondence. As I understand it, that is what my hon. Friend did.

Mr. John Smith: Can the Prime Minister confirm that Mr. Nadir is not and was not a constituent of either the hon. Member for East Hampshire (Mr. Mates) or the President of the Board of Trade? Is not it strange that a man charged with serious offences should be considered so important that Ministers make personal approaches on his behalf to the Attorney-General, who is responsible for his prosecution?

The Prime Minister: No doubt in the hubbub, the right hon. and learned Gentleman did not hear what I said to him. I made it clear that my hon. Friend approached the Attorney-General—following an approach from a constituent who was then an adviser to Mr. Nadir—18 months ago. That was entirely proper. Let me equally make it clear—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must come to order and hear both questions and answers.

The Prime Minister: Let me equally make it clear to the right hon. and learned Gentleman, so that there is no misunderstanding, that I am assured by my hon. Friend that he has had no financial involvement with Mr. Nadir, his companies or his advisers, either before he became a Minister or since. I hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will accept that.

Mr. John Smith: Will the Prime Minister tell us whether he thinks it was appropriate behaviour for a Minister to

give a watch to Mr. Nadir inscribed with a very supportive inscription, to put it mildly? Does the Prime Minister think that that is the way that he wants Ministers in his Administration to behave? Was not it bound to undermine the work of the Serious Fraud Office in pursuing financial crime? Is not it the case, as the country clearly understands, that this is a shoddy, unseemly affair that does no credit to this Administration?

The Prime Minister: I can certainly agree with the right hon. and learned Gentleman that it was unwise. I think that that is the view taken by my hon. Friend and he has said so in public. I know my hon. Friend recognises that, with hindsight, it would have been better if he had not done it. It was a misjudgment, but it is not a hanging offence.

Sir Dudley Smith: In view of the experiences of many Warwickshire residents over recent months, particularly in my constituency area, is my right hon. Friend aware that they are looking to him to introduce good and effective legislation to curb the so-called new age travellers? Will he tell us what urgency he is applying to that particular problem?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend raises a problem which has been faced in many parts of the country. It is one that I hope and believe we will be able to deal with in the next Session of Parliament.

Q2. **Mr. Khabra:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 8 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave a few moments ago.

Mr. Khabra: Will the Prime Minister personally condemn the speech made by the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill)? It has done a great deal of damage to good race relations in this country and it has also encouraged the fascists and racists to indulge in destructive activities. I hope that the Prime Minister will be able to give a positive answer to the community.

The Prime Minister: Neither of the epithets used by the hon. Gentleman applies to my hon. Friend and I hope that he will recognise that. I have not read all the speech to which the hon. Gentleman refers, but I have read some of the reports of it, which I understand were not accurate. On the day that it was published it did not represent my views or those of the Government. My commitment and that of the Government to good race relations is well known. I welcome without reservation the positive contributions which all communities make to life in this country and, as long as we maintain firm but fair immigration controls and refuse to tolerate racial discrimination, we shall keep the race relations which have been steadily improving over recent years, much to my pleasure. I hope and expect them to continue to improve.

Economy

Q3. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Prime Minister what representations he has received about the state of the economy; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have received a number of representations on the economy. There is growing evidence that recovery is under way across a broad front.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my right hon. Friend praise north-west exporters such as Rotocold in my constituency, which has gained record export sales and cut local unemployment to below the national average? Is not that in stark contrast to the failed union-dominated policies of the Labour party, which saw unemployment in the north-west double between 1974 and 1979?

The Prime Minister: That is true. Unemployment is always a tragedy when it occurs and it has occurred under every Labour Government we have seen in this country. I am happy to join my hon. Friend in congratulating the company in his constituency. It is good news. I understand that it has had more export orders recently and that will add to jobs in the region. There is no doubt that British manufacturing industry is now exporting at record levels and I welcome that. It is not unrelated to the fact that we now have policies of low inflation, low business taxation and trade union reform which have removed many of the difficulties in management that so bedevilled firms in the 1960s and 1970s.

Engagements

Q4. **Mr. Byers:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 8 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Byers: Will the Prime Minister say whether he wishes to see shipbuilding continue on Tyneside? If he does, will he confirm that the Royal Navy work presently at Swan Hunter will be completed there and that full Government backing will be given in order to secure vital export orders? Is the Prime Minister aware that if his Government stand to one side and do nothing, we shall witness the death of shipbuilding on Tyneside and the loss of thousands of jobs as a result?

The Prime Minister: I know of the hon. Gentleman's concerns about Swan Hunter, which are shared by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) and my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter), all of whom have made representations to me about it in recent weeks. I cannot confirm the details that the hon. Gentleman seeks today, but I hope that the firm will be able to put itself in a position in which it will be able to continue. That depends on its being able to obtain and produce orders at a price that the market will pay.

Sir Teddy Taylor: As one of the most helpful means of helping the growing army of unemployed in Europe would be to conclude the GATT discussions and as the Prime Minister has played such a positive and helpful role in that, will he explain to the country why the EC is being so difficult about concluding those discussions? It could bring down unemployment and put people throughout Europe back to work.

The Prime Minister: I think that I have some news that my hon. Friend will undoubtedly welcome. I understand that the French Minister for European Affairs has announced at today's meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council that France will be accepting the agreement on oil seeds, signed between the European Community and the United States last November. It is an issue which I discussed at my two meetings with the French Prime

Minister last month. I am delighted at the decision that has been made. I hope that it will enable the Community to go forward to other agreements relating to the Uruguay round. Although that is a separate issue from the oil seeds agreement, such an agreement was a necessary preliminary. It now removes one of the road blocks to a comprehensive GATT agreement.

Q5. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 8 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Beith: Is the Prime Minister beginning to regret that his reshuffle a couple of weeks ago was not more extensive and did not see the departure of Ministers responsible for education, shipbuilding and undue and extensive assistance to those who give large donations to the Conservative party? Does he realise that it is likely that the next reshuffle will involve himself?

The Prime Minister: The answer to the substantive part of the right hon. Gentleman's question is no.

Q6. **Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 8 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Lait: Will my right hon. Friend remind trade unionists that the hard-won democracy that they have achieved over the past 14 years is thanks to Conservative legislation? Will he tell them that only the Conservative party not only believes in but has legislated for one member, one vote?

The Prime Minister: It is certainly the case that we have more luck with trade union reform than the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) does. Throughout the 1980s the right hon. and learned Gentleman voted against each and every one of our reforms to strengthen the rights of individual trade union members and the Labour party still wants to oppose rights for individual trade union members. While Labour Members continue to hold those views we will continue to sit on this side of the House.

Mr. Hume: Given that this generation is going through the greatest economic revolution in the history of the world—the technological, telecommunications and transport revolutions—and that the wealth of society is being created by fewer people, does the Prime Minister agree that, logically, the state should be taking a greater role in the welfare of people instead of moving in the opposite direction towards the survival of the fittest and the law of the jungle? Given that they have already privatised heat and light, is there any truth in the rumour that the Government are about to privatise fresh air?

The Prime Minister: I have news for the hon. Gentleman. It is not owned by the Government and does not need privatisation.

Mr. Hume: What about water?

The Prime Minister: On his earlier point, the hon. Gentleman clearly overlooked the 67 per cent. real terms increase in social security, the additional uprating next year of £2·5 billion, the extra expenditure on benefits of 40 per cent., the exemption for people who cannot pay council tax, the fact that the Government, unlike our Labour predecessors, continue to pay the pensioners' bonus and the increase in consumer goods for the bottom 10 per cent. of the income scale. Those changes were made under this Government because of our economic success and social concerns.

ABB Transportation Ltd. (Redundancies)

3.31 pm

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the 896 redundancies announced yesterday by ABB Transportation Ltd."

[Interruption.]

Madam Speaker: Order. I would appreciate it if hon. Members leaving would do so quietly so that we might continue our business. I hope that hon. Members will show courtesy to the hon. Gentleman who now has the Floor.

Mr. Bayley: The redundancies were at the company's York, Derby and Crewe works.

Those shocking redundancies are the direct result of an explosive mixture of two Government policies—the cut in rail investment to the lowest level in real terms since 1948 and the hiatus caused by rail privatisation.

The redundancies are not an unlucky accident; they have not come out of the blue. I have been warning about them for many months, as have my right hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) and my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody).

The Railway Industry Association told the Transport Select Committee:

"We are staring annihilation in the face."

In its report, the Select Committee said:

"We call upon the Government to address as a matter of extreme urgency the problem of the hiatus in railway investment . . . to ensure that sufficient manufacturing capacity survives."

The House should be debating urgently whether the Government wish this country to retain the ability to manufacture trains, or whether they simply intend to buy them in from abroad, putting yet greater strain on the country's balance of payments.

ABB has done all it can to make itself competitive and attract orders. It has invested £20 million in the York works and made it the most modern railway factory in Europe. The work force have done all they can to improve the quality and competitiveness of the work. They have created a world-beating facility, and ABB is the last true British train manufacturer. Other companies compete against it, but they do not build the whole train; they buy in the body shells from abroad and assemble components to them.

If we want to retain the ability to build trains, the country must retain ABB. In the autumn statement last year, the Chancellor promised £150 million of leasing finance to save the rail industry. In March, I met the Minister for Public Transport—whom I see in his place—and he promised a decision by Easter, but that decision has not come. It could, however, have saved these jobs. At the Conservative party conference, the President of the Board of Trade said that he would intervene before breakfast and before lunch. Which meal will he skip to intervene now?

The House urgently needs a debate so that the Secretary of State for Transport can make a speedy announcement about who will get the orders from the £150 million, thus saving jobs in my constituency and in those of my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich and my right hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South.

Madam Speaker: I have listened carefully to what the hon. Member has said and I have to give my decision without stating any reasons. I am afraid that I do not consider that the matter which he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20. I therefore cannot submit his application to the House.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Madam Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

Fishing Vessels (Safety)

That the Fishing Vessels (Safety Improvements) (Grants) Scheme 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 1325) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

Shellfish Poisoning

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning) Order 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 1338) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

Civil Defence

That the draft Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) (Scotland) Regulations 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

Channel Tunnel

That the draft Channel Tunnel (International Arrangements) Order 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Question agreed to.

Points of Order

3.36 pm

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Have you received today any request by the President of the Board of Trade to make a statement on the way in which British Coal is handling the redundancies arising out of the closure of pits last week, particularly the way in which it is handling the cases of men who are on the brink of qualifying for early retirement?

There are men among those who are redundant who, having working for 35 years or more—all their working lives—are in some cases one, two or three weeks away from qualifying, at the age of 55, for early retirement, and British Coal is not allowing them to work out those few days in order to qualify. That is in marked contrast to the very constructive way in which British Steel at Shelton Bar and elsewhere in the 1970s tried to co-operate with the men, and allowed them to work out their time. I hope that the President of the Board of Trade has asked you for permission to make a statement to the House on this important matter.

Madam Speaker: I responded to the hon. Gentleman yesterday. A Minister does not seek my permission to make a statement, and I must make that constantly clear to the House. However, I must tell the hon. Gentleman that no Minister has told me today that he is seeking to make a statement.

Ms Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): Further to that point, Madam Speaker. May I bear out what my hon. Friend has just said and tell the House that, from Stoke-on-Trent, we have written to the President of the Board of Trade and asked him to take a personal interest in the way in which British Coal is not operating a proper industrial relations policy. Can you advise me how it is possible to bring this matter to his attention when we receive no replies to the letters that we have sent?

Madam Speaker: From what the hon. Lady has told me, representations appear to have been made already direct to the President of the Board of Trade. It is not a point of order for the Speaker of the House.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Do you not think that it is a very odd state of affairs that the House of Commons is supposed to reflect the issues that occur in Britain day by day, yet we have a President of the Board of Trade who spends more time consulting about Asil Nadir and how to get him off the hook and does not care tuppence about closing pits and the consequences for the thousands of miners who are thrown out of work? Why is he not brought to the Dispatch Box?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows very well that that is not a point of order.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. If the President of the Board of Trade has not indicated to you that he is coming along to make a statement, has he apologised for his gross incompetence?

Madam Speaker: That is hardly a point of order for me.

Infertility Services

3.38 pm

Ms Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to place a duty on district heath authorities to secure the provision of infertility services within the National Health Service; and for connected purposes.

The causes of infertility may be complex and in some cases cannot be explained. Whatever the cause, however, the emotional and psychological impact of the failure to conceive should not be underestimated.

There are many, often highly successful, treatments available for infertility. However, on a national basis the level of service provision and availability of infertility treatment has never been established. Recent changes in the structure and funding of the national health service have resulted in increased competition for resources and highlighted the emphasis placed on value for money for individual treatments.

Given that infertility treatment has often been seen as outside the main stream of national health service care, owing in part to poor understanding of the condition and of the treatment available, it is possible in the current climate that levels of provision may remain static or, unfortunately, decrease.

When we talk of infertility, we talk of thousands and thousands of men and women living in our constituencies. Let me give an example of the type of problem that is faced by couples.

Mary is 37 years old. She has been to see her GP with her husband Jack, who is in the Navy. They have been married for 14 years and have never managed to have a child. In the early 1980s, they put it down to the fact that Jack was always away. It has always been difficult to sort out the problem—*[Interruption.]*—this is a serious point—because they have never lived anywhere for any length of time.

Four years ago, they saw a gynaecologist, who diagnosed polycystic ovary disease in Mary and oligospermia in Jack. The typical features of the syndrome for women include disturbance of the menstrual pattern and infertility. Fortunately, many women can be treated for this syndrome. Men like Jack, if they are unable to be treated for infertility, will end up with a choice of agreeing to artificial insemination of his own sperm or that of a donor.

In this country, there are 12 million women of childbearing age. Some couples will choose not to have children, but the vast majority will do otherwise; 600,000 men and 600,000 women will want, but be unable, to have children. For them, infertility can be an absolute tragedy. Each of us, as a Member of Parliament, will have an average of 1,000 couples in our constituency who are unable to conceive, and require help. Some of this help is very simple: for instance, advice on the fertile time of the month, and general health advice about smoking and diet. Men who smoke produce fewer sperm and have more damaged sperm, and those who drink heavily also experience difficulties.

This advice can come from primary health care teams. The GP can do many of the investigations for infertility, and egg-stimulation treatment can be given in a partnership between the GP and local infertility units. A

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course of egg-stimulation treatment, including ultrasound monitoring of egg production, can cost as little as £200 or £300 to solve the problem of infertility.

Some will need more complex treatment, of course, such as in vitro fertilisation or GIFT—gamete intra-fallopian transfer—often known as test tube babies. Only 6,004 women had this treatment, which has been successful, between 1985 and 1990. Twenty times that number of women are waiting for the treatment but cannot get it.

For some, no treatment or help will be available, and adoption is paraded as the option. But there is often a long waiting list, and some areas may be reluctant to allow couples over the age of 35 to adopt babies.

Some people argue that infertility is not a health problem. That is to argue that the national health service should be re-titled the national sickness service. The "Health of the Nation" initiative has recognised a broad concept of health based on quality of life. For many infertile couples on whose lives infertility has such a profound effect, it is important to have access to treatment. For many couples, infertility is comparable to bereavement and major loss.

This Bill is not about test tube babies. I have given an example of the numerous forms of simple treatment which are available and which can be undertaken but which, in many parts of the country, are not available free through the national health service. The Bill will place a duty on health authorities to ensure that all areas of the country provide a comprehensive service. After all, the national health service is supposed to be based on the principle of need and not of ability to pay.

What sort of infertility services do we want the NHS to provide? The Independent College of Health has just surveyed 174 purchasing authorities in Britain. Its survey reveals that only one in four pay for advanced treatment. Two thirds of infertility treatments sought by women have to be paid for in the private sector because they are simply not available under the national health service.

We must develop a rational universal service with equality of access. Too often in the NHS, we veer from boom to bust. A proper planned service with the benefit of the intervention of organisations such as the Audit Commission is essential to ensure a comprehensive and efficient service. A clear first step would be the definition by the Department of Health of the clinical services required to be provided by local and central specialist units.

My Bill is not just about infertility. It goes to the heart of the fundamental principle of the national health service —that it treats people on the basis of their need. We want an NHS that asks not, "How can I help you?" but, "What can I do for you? What is it that you want?" Too often in recent years, the champions in our society have been the takers, not the givers. The strong have become stronger and the weak weaker.

The 600,000 men and women suffering from infertility problems have very real needs. Health care should be provided on the basis of an understanding of the facts. Health care policy should be developed for the benefit of many, not based on knee-jerk reactions to unusual cases.

I hope that the House will allow the Bill to proceed this afternoon so that we can make a clear statement to infertile couples in this country that we care about their needs and will fight for their rights.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Ms Dawn Primarolo, Ms Jean Corston, Mr. Malcolm Chisholm, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mr. Ian McCartney, Mr. William McKelvey, Mr. Terry Rooney, Mr. Mike Watson and Mrs. Audrey Wise.

INFERTILITY SERVICES

Ms Dawn Primarolo accordingly presented a Bill to place a duty on district health authorities to secure the provision of infertility services within the National Health Service; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 2 July, and to be printed. [Bill 206.]

Northern Ireland (Prevention of Terrrorism)

3.47 pm

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I beg to move,

That the draft Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 20th May, be approved.

This House is the guarantor and guardian of all our liberties. When circumstances have so demanded, it has acted to qualify or curtail those liberties, but it has done so only when that was necessary to preserve our greater freedom. Even then, it has always acted jealously.

So it has been in recent years in the case of Northern Ireland. That is why the temporary provisions of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991 lapse unless continued at the end of each successive year. No one, I am sure, would wish the Act to be permanent. Equally, however, our fellow citizens in Northern Ireland must not be denied protection from terrorism by reason of some disproportionate reluctance on Parliament's part to recognise their special needs and circumstances. Therefore, it is necessary once again this year for us to examine the balance, as we customarily do when debating the continuation of these temporary provisions.

We have again—but, at his own request, for the last time—the benefit of a review by Lord Colville of Culross, QC. His experience in this work stretches back to 1987. He has addressed it with great industry, skill and clarity. His penetrating mind has been of invaluable service to successive Secretaries of State, by whom his forthright exposition and willingness to change his mind on occasion in the light of further experience, have been greatly appreciated. I record my sincere thanks for this work, including for his last report published on 26 May.

Before I turn to a consideration of the Act, and of Lord Colville's recommendations, I wish to remind the House of the Government's published aims. They are: to maintain the rule of law; to ensure that all the people of Northern Ireland are free to express their political opinions without inhibition or fear of discrimination or reprisal; to defend the democratically expressed wishes of the people of Northern Ireland against those who try to promote political objectives, including a change in the status of Northern Ireland, by violence or the threat of violence; and to create in Northern Ireland the conditions for a just, peaceful and prosperous society in which local people can exercise greater control over their own affairs.

So that those aims can be achieved, it is the first priority of the Government in Northern Ireland to eradicate terrorism from whichever section of the community it may come. There is no acceptable level of violence and, for so long as violence continues, it will be met with a firm and resolute response.

Those are our aims, and the responsibility for achieving them rests with me. Under the constitutional arrangements which apply in Northern Ireland, as in England, the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, who is my principal adviser, has operational independence. His annual report was published on 27 May and it is important that I let the House know of his words concerning the support that the RUC receives from the Government.

Launching his new report, the Chief Constable said:

"When a terrorist outrage occurs, there is often a reaction suggesting that the handcuffs should be taken off the Police and the Army: that our hands should be untied from behind our backs. There are no restraints on the security forces, save those imposed by law and by the very nature of our democratic society. There is no political restraint stopping us from doing our duty or doing our best."

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I should like to make a little progress first, if I may.

The House will be reassured by the words of the Chief Constable. Just as importantly, so will the members of the RUC to whose Police Federation conference I quoted them this morning in Belfast, and so will the people of Northern Ireland. They are true words, and they needed to be said.

I hope that we shall read and hear no more, from people who should have known better, of that oft-repeated and deeply discouraging falsehood which the Chief Constable has so authoritatively exposed. The truth is that all lawful options remain open and available to the RUC to deal with a situation in which, to cite Lord Colville's words. "terrorists of all persuasions have perpetrated brutal and calculated murders and injuries."

Mr. Trimble: Will the Secretary of State give way now?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: If the hon. Gentleman feels that the cap fits, I will give way to him.

Mr. Trimble: I thank the Secretary of State for giving way. He has referred to the release of the Chief Constable's report, to the Chief Constable's press conference and to the comments that he made in the report in which he has said that the Government have been supportive of his position.

At the press conference, the Chief Constable put forward several changes in the law which he considered to be necessary and desirable. I understand that those changes have been with the Northern Ireland Office for some time and are being blocked there. Will the Secretary of State please comment on that, and say whether he will be prepared to support the clauses which I tabled today to the Criminal Justice Bill *[Lords]*, which give effect to some of the changes that the Chief Constable wants? Will he support them?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Nothing that the Chief Constable or anyone else proposes for amending the law in Northern Ireland is blocked. All proposals are considered carefully. it does not follow from that that each or even any proposal is accepted, but they are sensibly and carefully considered. The hon. Gentleman will have to bide his time to see what response the Government make to his proposals.

One option that remains available to me under the Act is the power to reintroduce internment. That power is dormant at present. To exercise that option would, of course, be a step of grave significance. None the less, its retention on the statute book—although it is not affected at all by this order—is essential. In the light of that, the Government readily endorse Lord Colville's prime recommendation that the temporary provisions of the Act should be renewed for a further year.

Among other things, the Act provides modifications to the criminal justice system, including the establishment of single-judge courts for trying terrorist-type offences; arrest, search and seizure powers for the RUC and the

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Army, together with the power to close roads; certain specific offences such as belonging to a proscribed organisation; and valuable powers directed against terrorist finances. It also contains significant safeguards for those who may be affected by the special provisions.

We are sure that the continuation of the temporary provisions is necessary to give the security forces and the criminal justice system the necessary powers to bring terrorists from all sides to justice. They are also needed to send to the Provisional IRA, the UDA, the UVF and all other such groups the clear message that the Government are determined to eliminate terrorism. Since the last debate, I have used section 28 to proscribe the UDA. Once those who seek to subvert democracy by taking life and destroying property have been defeated—but only then—the provisions of the Act will no longer be necessary and can thankfully be allowed to lapse.

Until that time comes, the powers that the Act contains will, under a Conservative Administration, continue to be available for use, resolutely and appropriately, for the benefit of all the long-suffering people of Northern Ireland. They impose heavy responsibilities on the security forces. I continue to be greatly impressed by the discipline, courage and self-control of the security forces in what are often very trying circumstances.

It is no doubt inevitable that there will be occasional lapses, and I strongly endorse, as do the Chief Constable and the GOC, Lord Colville's perception of the damage that is done to community relationships whenever conduct fall short of the high standards demanded. I am therefore particularly pleased to note Lord Colville's view that, in general, the sensitivity of the RUC and the Army has been greater than ever in 1992. I have no doubt at all that the security forces in Northern Ireland deserve the warm congratulations and gratitude of the entire House.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): I think that the whole House agrees with the final comment made by my right hon. and learned Friend.

Is it possible for him to assure us that the expertise and experience of the RUC is shared with special branch and detectives in Great Britain? Obviously, it is difficult to establish a person's innocence, and it is certainly wrong to try to show someone's guilt, on the Floor of the House.

Perhaps my right hon. and learned Friend could arrange for one of his colleagues to respond to the inquiries by the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) and myself, as well as Amnesty International, in the case of John Matthews. I will not ask for a detailed response now, but I ask him to arrange for the appropriate person to respond to the inquiries that have been made.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am aware that my hon. Friend, from his experience in Northern Ireland, will know that there is close liaison between the two forces, and that undoubtedly extends to the case to which he referred. I take heed of the point that he made on that person's behalf.

Lord Colville reports that the Act does not impinge on the majority of the law-abiding public to any great extent. Of course, that is not to say that it can be renewed by the House merely as a matter of course. In last year's debate, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) vouchsafed that the Labour party recognised "that some emergency legislation may be necessary".—[*Official Report*, 10 June 1992; Vol. 209, c. 377.] Unfortunately, he did not condescend to give the House any particulars. We hope that he will fill that gap today. Last year, he opposed the order and voted against the continuation of the temporary provisions because the Act contains the power to order detention or internment. So whatever emergency provisions Labour Members recognised might be necessary, they voted to discontinue everything covered by the order because they did not like detention.

The trouble with that specious cover for embarrassment was that the order did not touch detention—nor does it do so today. A separate order would be needed before the detention provisions could be activated. So we hope to hear today that the Labour party will support this continuance order for legislation necessitated by the continuing emergency.

It is customary at this stage to review the tragic landmarks of violence which make the Act necessary. Last year, there were 75 murders by republican and so-called loyalist terrorists. There have been 32 murders already this year to 3 June. They continue to illustrate how callous, barbaric and brutal terrorism can be.

The House will remember that, on 14 November last year, three men—one an ex-RAF pilot—were harmlessly spending an afternoon in a bookmaker's in Belfast when they were shot dead. On 19 November, Lance-Corporal Ian Warnock was waiting with his young child in his car for his wife to come out of a factory in Portadown when he was shot and killed. On 3 January this year, Dermott and Patrick Shields were murdered in their family grocery store in County Tyrone. The murder led to Julie Statham, Dermott's fiancee, tragically taking her own life. On 17 January, Sharon McKenna, visiting the flat of a pensioner who had just come out of hospital, was murdered.

Those are examples of deaths. There were also numerous attempted murders and examples of intimidation and extortion. Between 20 and 23 May, the Provisional IRA carried out four bomb attacks, two in Belfast, one in Portadown and one in Magherafelt, causing an estimated £22 million of damage, and damaging schools—one for the mentally handicapped—and hundreds of private dwellings. The existence of terrorists prepared to perpetrate such crimes explains why the Act is still needed. It has, indeed, already contributed to the arrest and charging of one of those alleged to have been responsible for the attack on Magherafelt.

The examples that I have given paint a grim but authentic picture. But the work of the security forces has had much success. Far from them operating at will and with impunity—as is sometimes untruthfully and damagingly pretended—terrorists have continued to be caught and brought to justice. In 1992, 405 people were charged with terrorist-related offences, including 101 with murder or attempted murder—a figure which represents a three-year high. As at 23 May this year, 148 people had been charged with such offences. Last year, 194 firearms and 49 rockets and mortar launchers were recovered by the RUC and the Army.

As at 1 June this year, 100 firearms and 24 rocket and mortar launchers had been found. In addition, since the middle of March, four bombs containing some 300 kg of

explosives have been intercepted in transit. There have also been substantial finds of fertiliser, which is a component of home-made explosive, and both republican and loyalist gunmen have been captured en route to carry out their disgusting crimes. Here I pay tribute to the co-operation between the RUC and the Garda Siochana in the Republic, which has never been higher.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): Does the Secretary of State agree that statistics mean little unless they are placed in context? I am sure that he recalls the statistics for 1981 to 1985. The number of terrorist-related killings fell from 101 to 54—a decrease of 45 per cent.—the number of terrorist shootings fell from 1,142 to 237—a decrease of 80 per cent.—and the tonnage of terrorist bombs fell from 529 to 215—a decrease of 60 per cent.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman will also be aware that, in the past seven years, the number of terrorist-related killings has risen by 50 per cent., the number of terrorist shootings has risen by 125 per cent. and the volume of terrorist bombs has risen by 70 per cent. How does he explain that increase since the end of 1985? Does it suggest any tremendous co-operation with the Irish Republic since that time?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have already paid tribute to the co-operation between the two police forces, which is extremely important. There are others to whom the hon. Gentleman should address the question of why increased terrorist crimes have been committed.

What matters—this is not the only thing that matters, far from it—are the successes of the RUC, most notably in bringing people to justice and in intercepting people bent upon these revolting crimes and preventing them from carrying them out. That is the context in which I introduced the figures. I know of the hon. Gentleman's opposition to the Anglo-Irish agreement. He is perfectly entitled to make whatever point he wishes in the context of varying statistics, and no doubt he will find an opportunity to do that during the debate, if he catches your eye, Madam Speaker.

I now turn to the specific recommendations in Lord Colville's report, and will deal first with remand times. Lord Colville rightly draws attention once more to the problem of delays on remand. He says that the matter is one for real concern, and I agree. He also makes clear the difficulties entailed in tackling the problem. Nevertheless, I am determined that we should make continued and substantial efforts to reduce remand delays wherever possible.

In the debate on last year's continuance order, I announced the introduction of a scheme aimed at reducing and monitoring the time defendants spend in custody before they are tried on indictment for scheduled offences —the cases in which delays have been longest. We set demanding targets of 38 weeks from first remand to committal, and 14 weeks from committal to arraignment.

The scheme began on 1 July 1992. The agencies involved in the prosecution process have embarked on its operation with great vigour, establishing the new machinery in which they work together to track the progress of cases, and give particular attention to those where targets are in danger of being overrun.

It is too early to reach firm conclusions on the results, but the first cases entering the scheme have only recently begun to reach their first deadline. A more satisfactory assessment will be possible in the light of a full year's operation of the scheme. Then we shall be able to address Lord Colville's proposal for a new scheme of time limits, statutory or otherwise, to cover all those on remand in custody for indictable offences. That is an important factor.

That, we think will be the time to decide whether the existing section 8, which many would see as too constricting, should be allowed to lapse. We are in the meantime prolonging the existing scheme. Lord Colville recommended that the scheme be extended to cover soldiers or policemen released into military or police custody on bail under section 3(6) of the Act. I can now announce to the House that the scheme has already been so extended.

Lord Colville also brings out the serious delays that may occur after arraignment. The Lord Chancellor has been very conscious of this problem, and his recent appointment of a further High Court judge reflects this concern.

The powers of arrest and detention under the Prevention of Terrorism Act have continued to play a vital part in bringing dangerous criminals to justice. They have also been the focus of criticism. Some of it has been entirely disinterested, but some less so, perhaps because of the holding centres' vital role.

The Government have, however, paid careful attention to all the criticism. Accordingly, since the last debate I have appointed Sir Louis Blom-Cooper QC as independent commissioner to monitor conditions and procedures in the holding centres. He is fulfilling this function with a will and is completely independent. He has been making unannounced visits, and he is likely to publish his first annual report in December. I suggest we wait to see what it contains.

Additionally, I am about to lay draft codes to cover the detention, treatment, questioning and identification of persons detained under the PTA. These will be based closely on the existing codes of practice under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. I hope to see them in operation during the autumn.

These two initiatives should go a long way towards reassuring people about the operation of the holding centres.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): The Secretary of State has referred many times to the report of Lord Colville. On holding centres, has the right hon. Gentleman any comments to make on Lord Colville's comments about complaints made by people who are arrested under the EPA and the PTA and held in such centres? The right hon. and learned Gentleman should refer the House to the figures collected by Lord Colville, because they are extremely interesting and speak for themselves.

In 1992, not a single one out of 395 official complaints made by people held under emergency legislation was sustained. Are the police in the north of Ireland, or anywhere else on this earth, as lily-white and squeaky-clean as that? The Secretary of State should bear that in mind and possibly do us the courtesy of reading out what Lord Colville said about a police complaints commission that is not working properly.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The hon. Gentleman invites me to do the House the courtesy of reading out a report which should, of course, be required reading for anyone taking part in the debate. I do not doubt that it has been well studied. I shall, of course, deal in a moment with what Lord Colville said about the police complaints commission and the way in which complaints are dealt with.

I should like, first, to talk about video recording, a matter of considerable importance, interest and controversy. Lord Colville suggests that we reconsider the possibility of the video recording of interviews to supplement the existing arrangements involving the use of closed circuit television.

I have often discussed this with the Chief Constable in the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland, where terrorists, as the whole House probably recognises, are under strict instructions from their organisations not to co-operate with the authorities in any way at all. It is the Chief Constable's firm view that such a move to video recording would inhibit still further the chances of lawfully getting information to secure convictions and protect life.

The keeping of a permanent record of interviews, with the fears of disclosure that it would engender in the minds of those interviewed, is seen by the Chief Constable as likely to tilt the balance too far in favour of the terrorist organisation. It would, he believes, put at risk those who might otherwise have felt willing to co-operate with police investigations.

All the same, in the light of the strength with which Lord Colville expresses his recommendation for a reconsideration of this issue, I have invited Sir Hugh Annesley to set out for my benefit his considered assessment of its merit. For my part, it is fair to say that I am not currently persuaded that the introduction of video recording would be in the overall interests of justice.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Does the Secretary of State agree that the major inhibiting factor is the question in the mind of an accused person that he has no control over the possible publication, at some future date, of the evidence which he has given?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: That is the single most important point on that side of the argument. There is a fear that procedures of disclosure or discovery in other criminal or civil proceedings, which may have been brought into existence for that very purpose, may lead to the tape being reported. That is in people's minds.

I shall not leave the subject of the holding centres without mentioning Lord Colville's comments on alleged intimidation of defence lawyers. I warmly endorse his conclusions. If such intimidation takes place—and without particulars I cannot know whether a single case is proved—it must cease immediately. Those who claim to have evidence should, as Lord Colville says, put it to the Royal Ulster Constabulary in a form capable of investigation. If they feel unable to do that, I believe that they should desist from allegations that they are not prepared to substantiate, but which have the effect of undermining confidence in a vital part of the criminal justice system.

The RUC, supported by the Army, is there to serve the entire community. It is right, therefore, that there should be avenues of complaint open to those who feel that they have been badly treated by any member of the security forces.

The Independent Commission for Police Complaints has been established to oversee complaints against the police. Since our previous debate, I have appointed Mr. David Hewitt as the independent assessor under section 60 of the Act to keep under review the operation of the Army complaints procedures. He, like Sir Louis Blom-Cooper, is entirely independent of Government and is required to publish an annual report which will be laid before the House. His first report is expected around the end of this year.

No complaints resolution system can ever be perfect in the sense of getting to the truth in every case. We shall continue to look at ways of improving the systems in use in Northern Ireland, but I believe that our systems are as accessible and thorough as any in the world. Only a small group of progressive nations at present provide for civilian oversight of police investigation into complaints. The work of the Independent Commission for Police Complaints is internationally recognised as providing independence without compromising the effectiveness of investigations, and I am grateful to it.

Lord Colville alludes to the Home Secretary's proposals for reform of police disciplinary systems. I shall shortly be asking for comments on whether those proposals would be appropriate for applications in Northern Ireland. That is relevant to the issue raised by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon).

Mr. John Hume (Foyle): We are discussing confidence in the security forces and the Government. The Secretary of State is no doubt aware of the Nelson case. Mr. Nelson was a member of the intelligence services of the Government, he joined a paramilitary organisation in Northern Ireland, was found guilty of murder and was, at the time, involved in the importation of arms from South Africa with which people are currently being killed, including some of the cases listed today—that is all public knowledge. Does not the Secretary of State think that, in the interests of the confidence of the community, there is a grave need for an independent public inquiry into what has become known as the Nelson affair?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The same issue was raised when we had a debate last year on 10 June. Mr. Nelson pleaded guilty to—I think—five counts of conspiracy to murder, not to murder. After criminal proceedings, he was sentenced to many sentences of 10 years imprisonment, which he is now serving. I believe that that has sufficiently disposed of the matter according to the processes of law.

I am grateful to Lord Colville for the attention that he has given in his report to the Government's innovative response to the challenge represented by terrorist fund raising. We agree with him that that is a most important aspect of the Government's programme for the defeat of terrorism, and one which affords significant opportunities. Terrorist racketeering has become a dangerously entrenched evil, and we are determined to overcome it.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Has the Secretary of State been able to make any progress in the vital sphere of cutting the funding—the lifeline on which terrorist organisations rely to carry on with their activities? Have there been any successful prosecutions of any of the groups involved? Have any of the assets of those involved been confiscated?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am just about to come to that subject. I do not prosecute those people: they are prosecuted by the Director of Public Prosecutions in Northern Ireland, who is completely independent. But I am about to mention the terrorist finance unit that we have put in place, and the legislation that we have introduced.

The provisions in both the Prevention of Terrorism Act and Emergency Provisions Act are being further enhanced by the Criminal Justice Bill, now in Committee. In particular, the Bill will make it harder for terrorists to launder and manipulate the funds that they need to carry out their acts of violence, and the proceeds of the crimes they use to raise those funds.

I can understand why Lord Colville proposes consolidating the body of anti-racketeering legislation into a single Act, which is something I shall be considering further. I also share the implicit impatience of Lord Colville and the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) for those provisions to be seen to bear fruit in criminal proceedings. I do know, however, of the meticulous care that is needed in the preparation of such cases.

Meanwhile, the initiatives are beginning to pay dividends, although it is widely recognised that racketeering is such a deep-rooted and endemic problem that it cannot be solved quickly. We recognise the significant opportunities that exist for further action in that sphere. We agree with Lord Colville that the focused effort by the RUC and others to curtail all forms of terrorist fund raising should continue to enjoy a high priority in the allocation of resources.

In order to assist the Royal Ulster Constabulary, we have set in place a special terrorist finance unit, and there is a special division within the RUC—C1(3)—consisting of people with specialist knowledge and experience whose work is dedicated to uncovering and stopping that source of funds for the terrorist organisations.

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): I apologise for stressing the point, but does not the fact that no convictions with regard to the confiscation of terrorist funds have occurred in two years suggest that the measures are insufficient? That seems to show that much more must be done in this vital area.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: As I have told my hon. Friend, who takes a close interest in these matters, we keep the issue under review, and we believe that there are ways in which the law can perhaps further be improved. But people are versatile in their critical faculties.

If one takes a case before it is fully investigated—as my hon. Friend knows, these are complex and difficult cases —and it fails through insufficient investigation, one gets stick for that. If, on the other hand, one takes a considerable time to make use of new legislation before starting proceedings—and there can be no convictions before proceedings are started—there is natural impatience. That must be borne philosophically by those who carry responsibility for such issues.

It is an essential part of the Emergency Provisions Act that, wherever practicable and fair, compensation should be paid to individuals who have suffered loss or damage to, or interference with, their private rights of property as a result of the security forces carrying out their duties under the Act. Large sums of money are paid out in that way, and all those concerned are eligible, even those who may have connections with proscribed organisations. I want to see whether that aspect of public expenditure would benefit from closer auditing.

Lord Colville makes some further recommendations in that area—notably, that there should be a means of compensation for those whose businesses are affected by the security forces, for example, having to close off a road on a sensitive interface or to give better protection for a vulnerable facility. I sympathise with those who are affected. I shall see whether it is possible to devise and implement a fair and practicable scheme which would help them, but that cannot be done quickly.

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): I wish to link the two matters about which the right hon. and learned Gentleman has spoken—those of racketeering and compensation. I have written several times to the Minister responsible for security in Northern Ireland about the fact that many people have been prepared to give evidence to the security forces and to stand by that evidence in the courts to show that extortion has taken place.

But those people immediately come under threat from terrorist organisations, as a result of which they have to close down their businesses, move home and often leave the Province altogether. They lose substantially in financial terms, but under existing legislation they cannot be compensated. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman is consolidating legislation in relation to racketeering and extortion, will he include a provision that permits compensation in those cases?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have strong sympathy with what the hon. Gentleman says. It is a painful and important dilemma. I have taken note of his remarks and will bear them in mind.

I have nearly concluded my speech. I apologise for having taken so long, but I have given way quite a lot. Our approach to Lord Colville's recommendations illustrates our intention, and that of the RUC and the Army, that the powers contained in the Act shall be operated firmly but with the maximum sensitivity. In the process of eliminating terrorism, many difficult decisions must be taken, and an accurate analysis must be made in each case.

Where security measures react against the amenities and convenience of the public—as they often do—the circumstances always have one thing in common. They are the result of activities waged by small and unrepresentative minorities of the people of Northern Ireland, and they reflect our desire to see this pestilence got rid of once and for all.

It is our primary aim to secure the elimination of terrorism. The people of Northern Ireland need to have confidence not only in the fairness, impartiality and sensitivity of our security policy and of the actions of the security forces—all those things are important—but in their effectiveness for dealing with the men of violence.

There will be no yielding to the terrorists. All the options open to a civilised state need to be available for use against them. They are available, and we intend them to continue to be available. Resolution and judgment must go hand in hand as the task of eliminating terrorism is carried forward, until the powers contained in the Act will no longer be needed. Meanwhile, and in the hope that this year the Labour party will do its duty, I commend the order warmly to the House.

4.24 pm

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): I require no lessons in my duty from the Secretary of State, who refused to prosecute policemen accused of perverting the course of justice. I join him, however, in passing on our goodwill and appreciation to Lord Colville for the work that he has done over the years to examine the operation of both these Acts. He has shown great diligence, and he has always respected the confidence of people from many different walks of life who have told him of their experience of and attitudes towards the Acts. He has meticulously approached the detail rather than the generality of statements made about the legislation. We applaud what he has done and regret that he feels it necessary to go on to fresh pastures.

It is unfortunate that so many of the important recommendations that Lord Colville made to improve the legislation have not been accepted by the Government.

The Opposition strongly support all that the Government have done in the area of terrorist financing. However, we believe with Lord Colville—we welcome what the Secretary of State said about this—that all this legislation should be consolidated. The laundering of terrorist money or of Mafia money or of other criminally gained money should come under the general criminal law of the land in a Criminal Justice Act, and should be subject to permanent legislation, not to emergency powers Acts or prevention of terrorism Acts. The principles and issues at stake are much the same, no matter who commits the crimes or attempts to launder the money.

I share the keeness expressed by the hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) that the legislation should have early results in the courts. I also appreciate the Secretary of State's point about the difficulties of ensuring that cases are cast iron before they are brought before the judges. A number of City fraud cases have fallen because of a failure to provide the court with precise and direct evidence in a manner that will convince a judge that the case should go to a jury, or in a manner to enable a jury to reach a proper conclusion.

Turning to more contentious matters, I must point out that these annual renewal orders have unfortunately become a tradition in the House. Emergency powers originally granted as temporary measures have now existed for more than 20 years. This year, there have already been depressingly high levels of injuries, deaths and destruction in Northern Ireland—the Secretary of State read out a sad and moving catalogue. All communities have been affected by the activities of paramilitaries—loyalist and republican. We must all emphasise that there would be no justification for any emergency legislation were these groups to renounce violence and stop the killing.

This debate is an important opportunity to consider the security system in Northern Ireland. We have heard what the Secretary of State regards as new initiatives, some of which we regard as rather tame.

Like the Secretary of State, I wish to take this opportunity to extend the Opposition's support and to commend the work of the security forces, the prison service and the judiciary in seeking to uphold impartially the rule of law, often in demanding and dangerous circumstances. We also welcome—as did the Secretary of State—the continued high level of co-operation between the Garda Siochana and the Royal Ulster Constabulary, and the Republic's decision to close loopholes in the extradition law, although we believe that both Governments are still making insufficient use of their respective criminal law jurisdiction Acts. Those Acts are the last remnant of the Sunningdale agreements that we have.

Although Labour recognises that there may well be a need for emergency powers to deal with the terrorist threat in Northern Ireland, we nevertheless cannot support the order while the power of internment remains on the statute book and while the Government still refuse to accept so many of Lord Colville's recommendations. The Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991 has granted the security forces considerable latitude; it has stretched the boundaries of the law almost beyond the limits of what should be acceptable in a democracy. The power of internment represents an infringement of such basic civil rights that its retention on the statute book is utterly unacceptable to the Labour party. It is no good the Secretary of State saying that he would to come before Parliament to reintroduce the power; it is true that he would have to lay an order before the House, but the internment would already have taken place. Otherwise, what would be the point of giving notice of it to the people? The Secretary of State knows that his argument is specious.

The power of the executive to imprison without charge —let alone trial—undermines the very basis of any free society, and thus can serve only to strengthen the paramilitaries. Such a power should have no place in a democratic society: it represents a defeat for the principle of the rule of law, and therefore a victory for the terrorists. Sir George Baker, the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights and the Government's own adviser, Lord Colville, have all called for an end to this power. We call on the Government again to heed the advice that those people considered it their duty to provide, and to put an end to the constant speculation that occurs after each terrible terrorist outrage over whether the Government should reintroduce internment. Such speculation simply plays into the hands of the paramilitaries; it increases apprehension in the community, and raises the levels of violence and alienation.

The impartial enforcement of the rule of law is particularly vital in Northern Ireland. Lack of confidence in the security forces and the justice system has only added to the sense of alienation that is felt by many in the region. Although the majority of members of the security forces maintain extremely high standards, there are still persistent reports that some are abusing their authority. That small minority is damaging both the reputation of the security forces in the communities that they police, and Britain's reputation abroad—as, sadly, I observed last week.

The Labour party is particularly concerned about allegations that suspects continue to face intimidation and harassment at holding centres. We recognise that the Government have attempted to address the problem with an independent commissioner for holding centres, but the appointment of Sir Louis Blom-Cooper to that post does not end the need for a lay visitors scheme, as recommended by the independent police authority. We hope that Sir Louis will consider an extension of the scheme.

The appointment does not go nearly far enough to allay fears of possible abuses at holding centres. The allegations that have been made only add to people's disillusionment

with Britain's justice system. Proper safeguards need to be introduced so that confidence in the security forces can be restored, and police officers can be properly protected against false accusations.

We have long believed that a major safeguard would be the introduction of video taping of interrogations. In his report, Lord Colville again called for the introduction of video taping in interrogation centres, stating:

"Recording of the CCTV signal would do much to save precious manpower time, public money, the reputation of the RUC and, internationally of the UK. I urge the Government to re-examine the case for video-recording."

The Secretary of State's reply to that recommendation was rather strange. He cited the reasons given by the Chief Constable why we should not have TV recording. He said that he was not convinced that we should have television recording, but he is now asking for a report from the man who says that we should not have television recording so that he can judge the merits of the argument again. That makes no sense and is typical of why there is such despair in many quarters about the Government's attitude to some of these problems.

Mr. Maginnis: Does the hon. Gentleman understand my frustration, as someone who represents a Northern Ireland constituency, as I listen to him articulate the case for the protection of the suspect to the exclusion of the interests of the innocent people in Northern Ireland? If he is against such measures as internment and wants video taping, he is entitled to put the arguments, but is it not ridiculous that at present the suspect has total freedom not to co-operate? If a suspect is thought to be drunk in charge, guilty of tax fraud or if he is a bankrupt, he has to co-operate. If he is caught with a rifle and a mask in a car, he does not have to co-operate and, moreover, the police have to prove that he has that material with intent to commit a terrorist crime. Where is the justice for the law-abiding community and the security service?

Mr. McNamara: The hon. Gentleman served on the Committee with me when we considered the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991. He will know that one clause deals with the issue of going ready to commit a terrorist act. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman's point about carrying a rifle and balaclava would not apply.

On the hon. Gentleman's first point, it is a duty to protect the reputation of the RUC throughout this country and the world.

Mr. Maginnis: The hon. Gentleman has never done that.

Mr. McNamara: That sort of comment, which the hon. Gentleman has made about many people on different occasions, is not worthy of him. Like every hon. Member, of whatever party and political persuasion, I support the security forces of this country in Northern Ireland in the impartial upholding of the rule of law. I do so absolutely and without qualification. However, I do not support them in partially upholding the rule of law.

Mr. Mallon: On the issue of going equipped to commit a crime, the key point is that the intention to commit a terrorist crime does not have to be proven. The issue is simply being caught with such materials, whatever they may be, away from one's abode. It would be different if the intention to commit a terrorist crime had to be proven. The hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) is wrong.

Mr. McNamara: My hon. Friend the Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) puts the point more succinctly than I did.

Rather than merely asking for another report from the Chief Constable, the Government should at least introduce video taping for a trial period within Northern Ireland. We also believe that the Government should go further and introduce audio taping of interrogations. If there were any possibility in those circumstances of sensitive intelligence material being released, an application could be made to a judge in chambers for sensitive material not to be produced for the defence. Equally, such material could not be used in prosecuting that case. Therefore, it would be possible to introduce proper protection of video and audio recording in Northern Ireland. Both those reforms would strengthen the position of the security forces and weaken the terrorist's ability to challenge the validity of confession evidence.

The Secretary of State mentioned access to legal representation as a fundamental safeguard in any system of justice and spoke about the role of lawyers. I should like to examine briefly some of those points.

A fundamental safeguard to any system of justice is access to legal representation. This has been confirmed by United Nations basic principles on the role of lawyers, yet the Government are still allowing that basic right to be curtailed. We welcome Lord Colville's report that the length of delays in allowing access to solicitors are decreasing, but the 28 per cent. deferral rate in the first nine months of 1992 is still too high and brings into question the role of justice in our society.

I hope that the Minister of State will assure the House that the deferral rate will be reduced still further, and that in future he will adhere to Lord Colville's recommendations that the restriction of access to a solicitor after the initial 48 hours be monitored closely, as in theory at present it is possible for the authorities to allow a suspect access to a solicitor only three times during a seven-day detention.

Justifications for delay, however, also include allusions to the fact that solicitors cannot be trusted not to pass on information which they receive from their client. That lack of trust is not only insulting to the legal profession, but dangerous, as it implies that the solicitor is somehow connected to the same cause or organisation as his or her client.

Such a smear—guilt by association—may well bring the authorities into conflict with the United Nations basic principle on the role of lawyers which states:

"lawyers shall not be identified with their clients or their clients' causes as a result of discharging their functions."

That insinuation appears to fit into the emerging pattern of alleged intimidation by the police of solicitors representing suspects charged with terrorist offences.

A number of such allegations are outlined in detail by the New York Lawyers Committee in its report, "Legal Defence in Northern Ireland". Those allegations, if substantiated, are extremely serious, as they go to the heart of our justice system which demands that every individual has a right to a proper defence. We agree with Lord Colville's findings that they represent

"a very grave and serious set of allegations that warrants a full and thorough investigation".

The Secretary of State should set up an independent investigation and not just leave it to the RUC against whom the accusations are being made.

[Mr. McNamara]

In any society safeguards are needed to prevent the abuse of power. However, even with safeguards, it is still necessary to have effective mechanisms through which complaints can be made if an incident occurs. The police complaints system is patently failing to provide proper redress for genuine grievances. Of the 395 cases of complaint completed in 1992, in only one case the police complaints commission recommended that charges be preferred against two officers who were subsequently found not guilty.

It is hard to conceive of any organisation with absolutely no abuses of authority and in which absolutely everybody is beyond reproach. I of course exclude the present Government from that comment.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McNamara: I shall continue just a little further if the hon. Gentleman will allow me. We have a lot to cover and I am sure the hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to intervene later.

Rev. Martin Smyth: It is on that point.

Mr. McNamara: This will be the last time so that we can make progress.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman giving way. Is there something wrong with my hearing or with the logic of the argument that is being deployed? The police would be amazed if they were all innocent, but is there no possibility of any lawyer being tainted?

Mr. McNamara: I am not suggesting for a moment that anybody who is involved in any situation is incapable of being tainted. But one cannot start with the basic presumption that people will be tainted and, when allegedly interviewing a witness, one cannot accuse the witness's solicitors of being tainted and suggest to witnesses that their solicitors are of no value because they are tainted. That is the nature of the allegations and that is why they must be examined independently.

We were talking about what Lord Colville says about the complaints procedure against the police. He said:

"The profession or discipline loses more efficiency and usefulness than its individual members gain by perceived, or real, immunity."

That apparent immunity from the law affects confidence in the United Kingdom's justice system, not only in Northern Ireland but throughout the world. That is why we support Lord Colville's call for a review of police disciplinary procedures in Northern Ireland and welcome the fact that the Secretary of State said that he would be taking soundings on the matter.

We welcome the Government's appointment of an independent assessor of military complaints procedures, but again it is to examine only the procedures for non-criminal complaints and not substantive complaints.

Recent High Court decisions have served to highlight the need for greater discipline in the armed forces serving in support of the RUC in Northern Ireland. While we recognise the strains of a tour of duty in the region, there can be no excuse for the many reports of harassment inflicted on members of the community by the security forces. The Army must be called to account for the 51 persons arrested by the Army under section 18 of the Act in 1992, none of whom were subsequently charged with terrorist-related offences.

The recent decision by a magistrate to bind over five of the paratroopers charged with assault and disorderly behaviour in Coalisland because they were "not entirely innocent" is a severe blow to the credibility of the regiment as a force of law and order. It was made worse by the decision by the regiment to take no further action against the men. The fact that no negative inference appears to have been taken from their silence calls into question their equality before the law.

Questions still need to be answered about who ordered the town to be sealed off immediately prior to the disturbance. I mention that because many commentators have agreed that the actions of the paratroopers had a direct impact in the May local Government elections in Dungannon. This is a classic demonstration of how security policy cannot be isolated from the political situation in Northern Ireland.

The recent conviction of a paratrooper for the murder of a teenage girl who was in a car driven by a joy rider again serves to confirm fears about the whole culture of the regiment, particularly if, as was reported in *The Independent*, after the incident the paratroopers built a large model of the car and a bloodstained head with a notice reading

"Vauxhall Astra. Built by robots. Driven by joy riders. Stopped by 'A' company."

The wall pictures flashed around on television screens of Europe, as I witnessed myself last week, did that regiment and this country no service.

While the introduction of the Army's early warning system and the new patrol identification cards are to be commended, they do not begin to tackle the underlying problem. Indeed, it is hard to envisage that a member of the public, having been harassed and intimidated by a member of the armed forces, would demand to see the soldier's patrol identification card. While these measures may have some deterrent effect, more needs to be done to stop the rising number of criminal complaints being lodged against the armed forces.

The actions leading to such complaints serve only to undermine the rule of law. For that reason the Labour party strongly endorses Lord Colville's recommendations that the Government introduce a code of practice on stop and search under the Emergency Provisions Act.

Lord Colville has again highlighted the inordinately long delays for prisoners awaiting trial. The Secretary of State has spoken about that and we support what he is trying to do, but we do not believe that dropping the legislative provision is necessarily the best solution.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McNamara: Very well. I am missing out pages of my speech to let other hon. Members in, but I will give way if the hon. Gentleman wants me to.

Mr. Porter: In his allegations or suggestions about the conduct of the army and this particular regiment, the hon. Gentleman might care to remind the House how many soldiers whether of the Ulster Defence Regiment or of the mainland regiments, have been killed since 1969.

Mr. McNamara: Yes I am aware of that, and we know it from the figures that the Secretary of State has already

given. But there is one difference. I judge members of Her Majesty's forces or of the Royal Ulster Constabulary not by the standards of terrorists but by the standards that we expect from those who operate in the name of a civilised and just society.

The Chief Constable asked for additional powers. I can understand his wanting them. He faces difficult tasks. But the fact that he asks for them shows the danger of separating security policy from political reality and treating the problem primarily as one of policing, a containment exercise, as if putting people behind bars means that the problem will go away. It is not that. We still need to ask if we can continue to maintain the same policing methods in an increasingly divided society when they have blatantly failed to win the support of the whole community.

Why, in a divided society where the population is split approximately 57 per cent. loyalist and 43 per cent. nationalist, are 92 per cent. of the regular constabulary and 94 per cent. of the full-time reserve drawn from one section of the community while those recruited for local service in the Royal Irish Regiment are nearly 100 per cent. from the unionist community? It creates problems in securing acceptance throughout the community of the role of the security forces and only heightens the perception that the security forces are failing to uphold impartially the rule of law.

The police cannot deliver summonses in certain parts of Northern Ireland unless accompanied by heavy military patrols. There are large swathes of the countryside, particularly near the border, where there is no effective policing at all as we understand it on this island. That is not to cast any aspersions on the integrity of any individual member of the security forces—it is a question of fact and a matter that must be tackled—yet there is no evidence of fresh thinking by Government on this matter. Discussions on confidence-building measures at the Anglo-Irish Conference are given the briefest of mentions, and no details go to those very people whose confidence needs to be won and increased.

Political and security issues are inextricably linked, and this must be recognised by the Secretary of State. Unless we tackle vigorously both issues, the Secretary of State's pious wish in his Liverpool speech for some form of political settlement to impact on

"support for, and confidence in, the police and other security forces and in the administration of justice"

will be so much whistling in the wind.

After 20 years of emergency powers and emergency policing, my hon. Friend the Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) and others have discussed the need for a more imaginative approach to policing in Northern Ireland and one that is more widely acceptable. We need to examine what can be done to achieve a more popular acceptance of the police.

Questions must be asked. Would it be possible to have community policing, to separate anti-terrorist policing from other forms? Perhaps it would be possible to share responsibility for anti-terrorist policing more fully with the Republic, to create a new form of constable, an Irish constable, as suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson). Perhaps we could have a force from both jurisdictions, with power to operate in both areas.

It is immediately argued, however, that one group would not accept the idea or that another group would feel that it infringed national sovereignty. But we must ask those who are not prepared to re-examine the role of the police and their acceptability to the whole community whether they want the present situation to continue indefinitely. It is only when answers to such questions are explored that the people of Northern Ireland will accept that they are receiving the protection of the law that they deserve and rightly demand.

The Government seem to assume that just because the emergency provisions legislation is on the statute book, terrorism will miraculously be defeated or at least contained and made more difficult, yet there is no evidence to support such unqualified confidence. The original emergency legislation was passed 20 years ago, yet according to a recent European Community report the murder rate in Northern Ireland is about five times the European average. Only the Calabria region in southern Italy, stronghold of the Mafia, ranks higher.

We recognise the urgent need for an effective anti-terrorist policy and we are now having conducted a major independent re-evaluation of existing measures to counter terrorism. The failure to develop a comprehensive civil libertarian policy to deal with political violence has led to contamination of freedom throughout Northern Ireland. It has also left the citizens of this island vulnerable to an ever present terrorist threat.

The Labour party, at least, recognises that the situation cannot be allowed to continue indefinitely. Because of this, because internment remains on the statute book, because the Government refuse to accept the basic safeguards of video and audio recording of interrogations and have constantly rejected the majority of Lord Colville's modest proposals for reform, we shall yet again, sadly but necessarily because it is our duty, vote against the order tonight.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. In the two hours and five minutes remaining for the debate, no fewer than 11 right hon. and hon. Members are hoping to catch my eye.

If those who speak will bear that in mind, we may manage to fit in all those who wish to speak.

4.55 pm

Sir Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): Next year, we shall have had 25 years of terrorism in the United Kingdom. It is now 20 years since I addressed the House on this subject and I want to do so again tonight in the light of the figure that I have just given.

Lord Colville's report is important and I would not for a moment question many of his suggestions. I am glad that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will give his urgent attention to them. I hope that when he reaches decisions, they will be speedily implemented. The more one compares the operations of Government in this country with those elsewhere, the more one recognises how slow and lacking in determination they are. This, therefore, is a case where we cannot hinder developments that are agreed upon and are urgently required.

What I want to do tonight, however, is to come down to the basics of this problem. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State set out the Government's objectives. They are the same objectives as Governments of all parties have had over the past 24 years, and they are

[Sir Edward Heath]

quite right. But the plain fact is that, despite the lengthy passage of time, the objectives have not been achieved; nor is there any sign whatever of their being achieved.

Let me make it plain at the beginning that I have the utmost admiration for the people of Northern Ireland. It is beyond my understanding how they can have put up with these conditions for this length of time. I have the greatest possible sympathy with them in the losses that they have sustained and the terrible life that they must live. That same sympathy goes to those now on the mainland, in Warrington, in the City, and all those elsewhere who are affected. That is the first thing that I want to make plain.

Secondly, I am in no way criticising the work of Her Majesty's forces. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State pointed out, wherever forces are deployed one finds occasional breaches of discipline. They are to be regretted, but I sometimes feel that there is so much emphasis on them that insufficient emphasis is laid on the good work that is being done by the forces, again in immensely difficult conditions. The same thing applies to the police. I have no criticism of them.

I must ask myself this question: at a time when other countries in Europe—to limit ourselves to that particular geographical area—have been able to deal with the problem, why have we failed? We have seen the most vicious forms of terrorism in Italy, with the Red Guards, in Germany, with the Red Army, in France and in Belgium, and they have got on top of it. In Spain, there have been periodic outbreaks, but they have been limited now to the Basque area. Why is it that those countries have been able to deal with this problem, but we have failed? We are entitled to ask that question.

The answer is that one can deal with terrorism only by being cleverer than the terrorists. That is absolutely basic. One has to be cleverer in intelligence, cleverer in action and cleverer politically. Again, to be perfectly blunt, we have failed in all three. That is why I want to get down to the basics; I do not believe that we can continue in this way. It is already being brought home to us here that the action in the City is damaging to our economic interests. Further action would be even more damaging.

This ought to be a major debate, but I have carefully calculated the number of those present and there are fewer than 5 per cent. of our Members here showing an interest in this matter which affects the whole of the United Kingdom. I ask myself—I do not wish to ask the House, because it might be embarrassing—whether, if the public relations representative of the IRA were in the Gallery, as for all I know he may be, he would say to his pals tonight, "My God, we are now in for a terrible time; with what those people are going to do to us, we shall be out of it." The answer is, not for a moment. He would go home and have a quiet drink and decide where to put the next bomb. This, I repeat, is why we have to get down to it.

Years ago, the other countries established official anti-terrorist bodies at the highest level, and that is why they have been successful. Those bodies took different forms, but we must have the same sort of thing if we are to be successful in dealing with this problem.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The right hon. Gentleman referred to the low attendance in the Chamber —I had to go to a meeting—but does he not agree that, despite the low attendance at such debates, since terrorism by the Provisional IRA began 23 or 24 years ago, and as it is now being carried out by their counterparts on the other side, the House has been unanimous in condemning terrorism and no political advantage has been gained by that terrorists? The House has not been divided during the near quarter of a century and our condemnation of terrorism and refusal to give way are as firm as at the beginning. Should not the right hon. Gentleman, a former Prime Minister, recognise that terrorism has not divided British political opinion, either in the House or in the country, and that it will not do so?

Sir Edward Heath: I have not suggested otherwise. I am saying that, after nearly 25 years, there must be a dramatic change. I hope that the whole House has recognised that by now.

As I have said, other countries established central organisation, and here is my main point: I believe that the Prime Minister must now lift the level above what it is today if we are to achieve results. This matter must be put in the hands of one very Senior Cabinet Minister whose sole purpose will be to deal with terrorism in the United Kingdom. That is what is required.

I make no reflection on my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State or his predecessors. The Secretary of State is not responsible for what happens in the rest of the United Kingdom in dealing with terrorism. He therefore cannot be asked to carry out that task. It requires a very senior member of the Cabinet, because he must be able to carry with him other colleagues who feel that they have an interest or he must be able to lay down the law and say that something will be done because the Prime Minister wants it. That would be a major step forward, and the sooner it is taken, the better. We have seen various changes since the end of the cold war, particularly in regard to MI5, but no one is trying to co-ordinate.

My other point—which I will make very briefly, because you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, asked us to be as brief as possible—is that dealing with intelligence during the cold war, internationally or internally, was quite different from dealing with problems of this kind in Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom. The sources of intelligence are quite different. Trying to find people who have been planted by Moscow in some social gathering or Government Department is quite different from the present situation. These people move in entirely different areas. When MI5 wanted to get a good spy, it did not go to the local pub, but that is where these people can be found. We must have people who understand that, who know how to go about it and who get the information.

Of course, that will be dangerous, and some of those people will come to a sad end, but if we are to overcome this terrorism, that is part of the price that we have to pay. The sooner that intelligence is integrated, the better. It passes belief by most people who look at this, certainly from outside, how any group could have got together all the explosives that were planted in the City, let alone planted them there and arranged for the whole lot to go off —incidentally, doing £300 million of damage. Yet that is going on, and we do not know when and where the next explosion will be. That is intolerable after 25 years of trying to deal with this problem.

There are many things that could be done and ought to be done speedily once we get a supremo in charge. There should be videos—not from the point of view that has been

discussed, but for the protection of all sorts of organisations. That would cost money, so the organisations should be given tax rebates. That would be a useful job for the Chancellor of the Exchequer and would encourage people to cover all possible sources of information. Many other things could be done.

Intelligence will cost money, because one cannot get the information out of people unless one is prepared to make arrangements with them and for them. That all costs money, but the information is available. I will give one small personal example.

On one occasion, an article appeared in a Dublin paper which had been planted by the IRA and which libelled me. An attempt was made to find copies of the paper in London and those concerned said that they knew the people who sold the papers and would be able to get copies. When they went to that source, there was not one copy to be seen; the usual suppliers said that they had refused to take the paper that time. They knew what was going on. They did not know that I never bring libel actions, or they might have acted differently. So the information is available, but one has to know how to get it.

Turning to the political side, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has emphasised quite rightly, as has the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), that the politics and the military force go together. It is right that we should concentrate on politics, but we must also recognise that, until we begin to make serious progress against the terrorism, the politics will be more difficult. The more progress we make against the terrorism, the easier the political aspect will become.

The Secretary of State has been persistent, as were his predecessors. In 1985, eight years ago, there was the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Nothing has happened since then. There are certain political factors that we must face up to. The first is that we must have the best possible and closest relationship with the Republic of Ireland. I know that that will give offence, but it will have to be accepted. We shall not settle this problem until we have the closest possible relationship with Eire. We are in the same Community; we are both members. We have the same level playing fields in many different spheres. Why, then, can we not be together on this?

My impression, from the contacts that I have, is that the possibilities are becoming greater. There are changes coming about in the Eire constitution that we would not have dreamt of 20 years ago. We must use the situation to our advantage and have the closest possible relations with the Republic of Ireland.

Secondly, I say to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State that, as his predecessors discovered—and as I knew in 1973—there is no purpose in carrying on talks if the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) is a participant, as there will never be agreement. The Government must face up to that. There is no point in continuing to be nice. That will not produce any answers. The hon. Gentleman does not want agreement; he has always done everything possible to prevent agreement and he and his supporters will continue to try to prevent it.

Some hon. Members present today will remember Sunningdale—the only successful negotiation that we have had. It established the tripartite arrangement, which worked perfectly well—better than any of us ever thought it would—until the petrol strike in May 1974, when Mr. Wilson said that he would break the strike and failed to do so, with the result that the coalition broke up. Sunningdale was the best thing that we have done for Ireland.

I only obtained that agreement because I excluded the hon. Member for Antrim, North. I would not have him at the conference because I knew that his only purpose would be to prevent agreement. He protested strongly. He actually came to Sunningdale to see me. I told him the same thing again. I said, "You're out. We're here to reach agreement." That should be the Government's position. There is no point in continuing as at present. Every set of talks at which we fail to reach agreement makes the situation worse; that is always the case. Let the Secretary of State say, "All right. Out. Now we will have people here who want agreement." Only then will we get agreement.

It is necessary—very necessary indeed—that we reach a political agreement with Eire. What substance is there in hon. Members' complaint about the Anglo-Irish Agreement? It is just a way of trying to establish an entity. It is just not worth it. It is immensely damaging to the people of Northern Ireland and, because terrorism takes place, it is also damaging to those of us in the rest of the United Kingdom. That is the plain fact.

At the end of the debate on the order, regulations and so on will be passed. Let us realise that we must get down to the basic factors, and speedily. We need high-level central direction for the whole of the United Kingdom. Our primary emphasis must be on intelligence, and new intelligence. Following from that, our secondary emphasis must be on the action that can be taken by the police and the military forces.

I have said already that we need to be cleverer than the terrorists. There is no place for saying, "He is the next one due for promotions, so put him there," or, "He has been waiting for a long time, so put him there." We all know that from our experience in the services and elsewhere. If one does not put the cleverest people where they are most needed, it just does not work. That was discovered early in the second world war. Those who had responsibility found that the people who had been in post in peace time simply were not up to the job. They sent out for the cleverest people in the universities, in business and wherever they could be found, and those people produced the answers. We had better learn that lesson today, too. We must use the best people we have.

The Cabinet spends a great deal of time arguing about deploying forces here, there and everywhere in the world, yet we are not dealing with and have not solved our own problem. What does the rest of the world think when we say, "This is what you ought to do"? People politely ask, "What about Northern Ireland? What about the fact that the City of London was blown up?"? Of course they do not take any notice of us when they see the problem that we have on our own doorstep.

I hope that I have been helpful to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. I have lifted responsibility for the matter to a higher level. I hope that the Prime Minister will appreciate the additional task that I am giving him. In giving him that additional task, I have confidence in him. I believe that I have outlined what must be the solution to a problem that has existed for nearly 25 years. The situation has gone on for far too long and cannot be allowed to drag on any longer.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the right hon.

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) to mislead the House by telling it that I was at Sunningdale? I was never at Sunningdale. I brand that lie as I brand the other lies that the right hon. Gentleman has told the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is for the hon. Gentleman to make his own speech. He has not raised a point of order for me.

Mr. McNamara: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) accused the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup of telling lies. Surely, such remarks are unparliamentary and should be withdrawn.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I did not understand the hon. Member for Antrim, North to say that the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup was deliberately telling lies. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] Order. I did not hear the hon. Gentleman say that the right hon. Gentleman was deliberately telling lies. That is a fact and it is no laughing matter.

Sir Edward Heath: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Antrim, North said that he never went near Sunningdale. I saw him myself in Sunningdale and talked to him there. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It might be advisable if the right hon. Gentleman and the hon. Gentleman were to sort the matter out for themselves.

5.16 pm

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): I had intended to start my remarks by saying that it was always a stimulating experience to follow the Father of the House. In the light of the brisk exchanges that have already taken place, to which we shall no doubt return, my words have come truer than I expected.

The well-thought-out proposals on security made by the Father of the House are worthy of serious consideration and I share the right hon. Gentleman's hope that Her Majesty's Government will take them to heart. He and I can remember the days of Templer, when people said that Malaysia could never be pacified and that it would be a running sore for generations. Because of effective and strong political and military leadership——

Rev. Martin Smyth: He was an Ulsterman.

Mr. Molyneaux: And he was an Ulsterman into the bargain

—the campaign was terminated much earlier than we had a right to expect.

I entirely agree with the Father of the House that, where terrorism had been a destructive force in other European nations, those nations had been able to tackle the problem in a co-ordinated way within their own boundaries. If the right hon. Gentleman will forgive me for saying so, there is a slight contradiction between that assertion and the point that he made towards the end of his speech, when he advocated the internationalisation of the security problem in Northern Ireland by inviting in the Irish Government. I want to return to the political aspect later.

On the equivalent occasion on 10 June last year, the motion before us was almost identical to that on the Order Paper today. At the end of that debate, the official Opposition took the unwise—some might say irresponsible—decision to divide the House. The intention was, as it always is in a Division, to defeat the Government. There was a possibility that they might just have succeeded on that occasion. Tonight, however, the position is very different.

Had the Opposition succeeded in defeating the Government on that earlier occasion, the law of the land would have been changed. That would not be the case today, because a formula that was originally designed for the duration of the talks last year has now been given a certain rigidity and permanence. That formula is expressed in the words, "Nothing is agreed until everything is agreed." It follows that nothing can be agreed until everyone agrees. In the light of the remarks made by the Father of the House, I think that he sees the difficulty of achieving success given that formula.

That straitjacket will have an effect on our parliamentary processes as profound as—if I dare mention it—the Maastricht treaty, which I understand is under discussion in another place today. It is rather a pity that there should be a clash of attractions within the same building. It says much for the devotion of the Father of the House that he has chosen to participate in this debate and has not yielded to the blandishments of the siren voices in the other place.

When the Secretary of State opened the debate last June, he referred to the new provisions contained in the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991. He mentioned changes that were intended to make the fight against terrorism more effective. Unfortunately, we must admit that there is no tangible evidence of improvement. In the past year, there has been an escalation in violence and counter-violence. Although "The Talks" last year and the rumours and distortions surrounding them have destabilised the entire community, the enhanced powers have had no appreciable effect. One must conclude that the changes in the law, which have been under consideration for many months, must be delayed no longer. In that respect, I agree with the Father of the House.

The price of delay in human terms and human lives is far too great to justify delay. When I visited Portadown last week, I was told that when the Minister of State visited the town, he asked some bystanders what they would do. I have great admiration for the intellect of the good citizens of Portadown in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble). However, they could be forgiven for feeling that perhaps the Minister of State might have had some sound ideas of his own given that he has at his disposal the products of a vast intelligence-gathering machine, not to mention the much-vaunted security co-operation with the Irish authorities which is said to have improved from one Northern Ireland Question Time to the next over the past nine years. The packaging was entitled, "Peace, stability and reconciliation."

If the Minister of State did not know what to do then, he knows what to do now. The Chief Constable of the RUC, in presenting his report two weeks ago, published his list. He said that he wanted to see changes in the law under the following headings:

> "1. the removal of the right to silence when being questioned about crime;

2. a refusal to answer questions in carefully defined circumstances should be an offence;
3. accomplice evidence should be more readily admissable;
4. previous terrorist convictions should be admitted to show system or courses of conduct;
5. the burden of proof, in defined circumstances, should shift to the accused;
6. evidence of an intelligence nature should be admissible, again in carefully defined and controlled circumstances;
7. the discovery process requires revision."

The Chief Constable is no firebrand. He is the responsible head of the best and second-largest constabulary in the United Kingdom. He will have reached those conclusions after long and careful deliberations. He is the person best fitted to know exactly what is needed to ensure that the law enforcement agencies and the courts can co-operate within a coherent framework. The Secretary of State and the Minister of State must pay heed to the senior officers of the police and the Army in respect of their advice and perhaps pay less attention to the desk-bound advisers whose flawed schemes have destabilised the entire Ulster community.

The Secretary of State had the benefit of the first-hand views of the chairman of the Police Federation earlier today. He will have heard him say:

"In our case, however, our difficulties are not largely of our own making. Much of the cause of the discontent felt by the police service in Northern Ireland can be very firmly laid at the door of Stormont Castle and Queen Anne's Gate."

On the issue of security, the chairman said:

"We have a Government that is trapped in clichés and whose only other response is to call for cool heads and hard looks at the situation."

The chairman, Mr. Beattie, went on to support the Chief Constable's plea for sensible amendment of the law and he concluded:

"Together, the police service, the judicial system, the community, and a Government more obviously armed with the political will to win, we can and will succeed in ending this misery."

His words were not entirely out of line with what the Father of the House said.

We are striving to do our part. Today, my hon. Friend the Member for Upper Bann has tabled an amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill *[Lords]*, which is currently in Standing Committee, in the following simple terms:

"a refusal to answer questions in carefully defined circumstances should be an offence."

I trust that the Secretary of State will draw the Home Secretary's attention to that amendment and persuade him to accept it.

The Secretary of State referred to the second recommendation of the Colville report which urges investigation into allegations of intimidation of defence solicitors. I agree that there should be such an investigation. There is a belief that accused persons often demand access to names and addresses of witnesses. If a solicitor honourably refuses to hand over a deposition, the threat and intimidation are switched to the solicitor's clerk and to the solicitor's office staff. When such intimidation is clearly effective, it is small wonder that the intimidated should be reluctant to come forward. It might also be prudent to check on ugly reports that certain terrorist organisations claim a share in legal aid costs.

The chairman of the Police Federation used the phrase "a Government more obviously armed with the political will to win".

There is a perception that the Government do not have that will to win. None of us can ignore that perception. At its root cause there is an even greater question mark over the Government's will to govern. I hope that I can carry the Father of the House with me because there is common ground on the philosophy of making a start in governing Northern Ireland more efficiently by beginning at the bottom layer.

The Government's will to govern is questioned in the wider context of the United Kingdom as a whole. However, I do not intend to stray into that area today. It may be unfair, but it is a factor in the minds of terrorists and their victims. However, I shall restrict to Northern Ireland my judgment on the Government's will to govern.

If the Government really possess that will, why do they permit advisors to hook them on the phrase, "nothing can be agreed until everything is agreed"? Why does the Northern Ireland Office block the prospect of modest progressive improvements to the governance of Northern Ireland? Why, over more than 20 years, has the Northern Ireland Office destroyed, through flawed initiatives at intervals of roughly every 18 months, stability that was patiently created?

Why cannot the Northern Ireland Office be content with the proof that Ulster's political leaders can and do work together, sit together and co-operate on a wide range of economic, health, education and environmental matters to an extent that no hon. Member would contemplate in respect of any of the other political leaders from Great Britain?

Given that the greater number—I use that phrase rather than "the majority"—of Northern Ireland citizens fully support that kind of activity, will the Secretary of State try such endeavours for the next six months? Is he in any doubt about the dedication of my party to that course, which would restore stability and which could lead to the defeat of terrorism from whatever quarter?

5.28 pm

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): If there has been a common theme in the debate so far, it has been a frustration about the length of time that "the troubles" —as they are euphemistically called in Northern Ireland —have continued. For almost a quarter of a century, the United Kingdom's citizens in Northern Ireland have suffered an horrendous campaign of violence.

As we come to the ritual of the continuation order of what are described as emergency provisions, the word "emergency" speaks to me of something that is temporary or periodic. However, it is now a way of life in Northern Ireland. It would be worth while for the House to consider whether we are winning the battle against terrorism, whether progress has been made and what changes there have been over the past 23 or 24 years.

Statistically, it can easily be shown that things are worse now than they have been for many years. During an intervention, the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) gave some statistics that showed that there had been a sharp increase in violence since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The death statistics for Northern Ireland show that 3,053 people have been murdered as a result of terrorist campaigns. Of those 3,053, some 640 have been members of the Army, the UDR or the Royal Irish Regiment, and some 290 have been members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and its reserves.

[Mr. Peter Robinson]

The overwhelming majority of those who have been killed were civilians. Most of them were innocent in terms of not being involved in any way in any political or paramilitary organisation. Outside the 3,053 people who have been killed in Northern Ireland, 100 have been killed in the Republic of Ireland, 118 have been killed in Great Britain, and 18 have been killed in other parts of Europe directly as a result of the terrorist campaigns from Northern Ireland.

If those cold statistics are hard to take in, the fact is that, if the Northern Ireland community of some 1·5 million people is considered in ratio to the population of Great Britain, one would be envisaging the murder of some 125,000 people on the mainland. One would be talking about more than 1·25 million people on the mainland having been maimed and mutilated as a result of violence. If that had happened on the mainland, the response of the House to terrorism would have been of much greater urgency than it has been.

As I listened to the speech of the Father of the House, I noticed that there were heads nodding on both sides of the Chamber during his early comments. However, as he suggested how we might deal with the problem of terrorism, the heads ceased to nod. A major difficulty is that we all agree that terrorism is wrong and should be brought to an end but, when it comes to how it might be brought to an end, there is a great disagreement in the House, and, indeed, in the community as a whole.

In terms of the level of violence, the main change in terrorism over the past quarter of a century has been the fact that, instead of dealing with one major sophisticated and well-trained terrorist organisation, we are now dealing with terrorist organisations on both sides of the community, carrying out almost an equal level of attrition against the Northern Ireland people. The violence is now two-sided. It is much more deeply rooted than ever before. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that there is much greater support for terrorism than there was during the early part of the troubles in Northern Ireland.

What is certain is that terrorism is much better organised now. It is more sophisticated. It is part of an international terrorist regime. There is the ability for much greater training and better equipment. Indeed, it is sad to discover that the terrorist is often much better equipped than the member of the security forces whom he will have to face as he attempts to carry out his assassinations.

Therefore, in terms of the arsenal of terrorism, the terrorists are in a better position than ever before. They have no reluctance to carry out their campaign of violence. They have in no way lowered their resolve to continue their acts and their attrition in Northern Ireland. There appears to be no shortage in the funding or manpower of terrorist organisations.

I remember a group of Conservative Back Benchers being in Northern Ireland. After a briefing from the Northern Ireland Office and security chiefs, they were able to tell us that they had been told that there were about only 300 active terrorists in Northern Ireland—this is several years ago. Today, the Secretary of State told us that more than 450 of those 300 were put in gaol last year, and another 150 have been put in jail so far this year. The statisticians better get back to work and sharpen their pencils because their calculations are clearly inaccurate. There seems to be an ever ready supply of people who will go out and carry a gun or place a bomb.

After a quarter of a century of terrorism, the community is right to ask: when will it end? Are we winning the war against the terrorists? If there had been the least indicator that some step had been taken along the road towards defeating terrorism, the community could place its confidence in the Government. However, the community does not see that we are winning the war against terrorism—far from it. The community has no confidence in the Government's security policy.

Therefore, it says to the Government, "If you simply continue to adopt the policies that have failed for a quarter of a century, what hope is there for us in Northern Ireland?" The Government must address that question and decide what steps can be taken to grasp the nettle of terrorism, rather than simply contain terrorist violence at the present level.

In 1985, we were told by the then Prime Minister that there was a political way of defeating terrorism, and that the agreement that she had signed with the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic would bring peace, stability and reconciliation. The statistics given earlier show that, far from giving peace, stability and reconciliation, the violence has increased substantially. The people in Portadown are entitled to ask: where is that peace? The people of Magherafelt and those who live around the Drumkeen hotel, which has been bombed twice in the past few months, are entitled to ask the same question, as are those in other parts of my constituency who have buried their loved ones recently.

The hand of violence has been active on both sides of our community. In the past few days, a 65-year-old Roman Catholic man was killed in Dundonald. What possible advantage is there in killing an old-age pensioner in his home? His only interests seem to have been his grandchild and playing a round of golf. Yet that is the level of terrorism that takes place. That man had lived in and been accepted by the community for more than 20 years. He had even done some painting and decorating for members of the security forces.

I will not fall into the trap of saying that it is mindless violence, because there is always a purpose in the violence of either the IRA or any other terrorist organisation. Of course, the purpose is to create fear in the community and to stake out one's territory, wherever that territory may be. The House has a responsibility to show in the clearest terms that there is no moral justification for violence. Violence cannot be morally justified, because there are no special circumstances that need to be addressed, and it is not legitimate. Violence cannot be justified by terrorist action in any section of our community. The nature of terrorism has not changed over the years. It is intrinsically evil, and evil in its every aspect.

Moreover, terrorism is the antithesis of politics. The people who are involved in terrorism are not misguided politicians. They are terrorists. Therefore, they should not be treated as misguided politicians. I conclude from that that the Government should not deal with them by means of negotiations. They should not be brought to the negotiating table. I go further. They should not be given the credibility of being part of the political process by being brought into dialogue of any nature.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Does the hon. Gentleman consider it extraordinary that, in what was in the main a most fascinating and positive speech, the Father of the House suggested that a political party in Northern Ireland should be excluded from talks about finding a solution to the desperate problems of that country?

If the hon. Gentleman believes what he has just said in condemnation of terrorism, and if he believes in democracy and the political process, does he believe that it is utterly wrong that my right hon. Friend should seek to exclude from discussions and consultations a party, and the leader of that party, which upholds the constitution and law and order and deplores terrorism?

Mr. Robinson: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's encouragement to respond to that point. Of course the Father of the House is right. It is always easier to achieve agreement if some of those who are a party to the difficulties are excluded. For example, if we excluded the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) and his party, it would be possible to reach agreement. Indeed, during the last talks process, the other three Northern Ireland constitutional parties reached agreement to which the hon. Member for Foyle did not give his assent. So if one excludes people, one will always find it easier to reach agreement. But that will not solve the real problems in the Province.

Mr. Hume: If the hon. Gentleman is so opposed to paramilitary activities in the way that he has stated here, why were he and his party involved in setting up the Ulster Resistance Movement, a body which has since imported arms, which everyone knows kill human beings in Northern Ireland? What connection had the hon. Gentleman's party and its origins with the Ulster Protestant Volunteer Force, which was the first organisation to use violence in the past 25 years? Some of that organisation's members later complained in court that it was a tragedy that they ever knew a certain hon. Gentleman in the House.

Mr. Robinson: I can well understand the sensitivities of the hon. Member for Foyle, who stood in the ranks of those who attacked the police in the city of Londonderry, who told us that it would be a united Ireland or nothing, and who now sits down with the leader of the IRA-Sinn Fein and puts out joint proclamations with the leader of the IRA-Sinn Fein through the press centre that claims the death of my fellow citizens. I can understand his sensitivities on all those things, but I propose to conclude——

Mr. Hume: Answer the question. What did the hon. Gentleman have to do——

Mr. Robinson: I heard the hon. Gentleman's question when he was standing, so I do not need to hear it again when he is in a sedentary position. The Ulster Democratic Unionist party has consistently supported the security forces. It has never been a party to violence in any form. The hon. Gentleman, who has a history in Northern Ireland of street politics, is the last person whom I shall allow to lecture me on the subject. The Ulster Democratic Unionist party has no relationship with any organisation that is involved in terrorist activity.

Whenever the Government are asked whether they are prepared to take tough and resolute action on the security front, they say that it would be counter-productive to do so. In a letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), the Prime Minister said that such a course would damage the integrity and credibility of constitutional politics and the institutions of the state—damage which he believed would be irreparable. Therefore, he implied that, if one took tough and resolute action on the security front, there would be an advantage to the terrorists.

Everyone knows that terrorism thrives particularly in a liberal democracy, and that terrorism enjoys the fact that in a liberal democracy people must have recourse to emergency legislation. However, the one thing that the terrorist dislikes most is that no appeasement is given to him as a result of his terrorist activity. An intervention was made in the speech of the Father of the House in which it was suggested that the Government had not made any concession to violence. That was inaccurate. The Government have consistently made many concessions.

One concession that stands out is the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It was a major concession to violence. When the then Prime Minister signed the agreement, she said, "I simply could not allow the violence to continue." She clearly indicated to the public and to the world that her signature on the Anglo-Irish agreement was brought about by the violence of the Provisional IRA.

If the terrorist organisations know that they have the ability to gain concessions from the Government through their violence, the certainty is that violence will continue. Indeed, after the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed, the publicity officer of the IRA, one Danny Morrison, said that the Anglo-Irish Agreement had been won by the sacrifices of the volunteers. He implied that, the more violence there was, the more concessions there would be. That being the fact, the Government have encouraged violence by the political actions that they have taken.

The Government's acceptance that the Government of the Irish Republic can be involved in a joint authority under the Anglo-Irish Agreement is an encouragement to those who carry out violence on the nationalist side to continue their violence. It is essential that the Government make no concessions to either those who are directly involved in violence or those who ride on the back of those who are involved in violence. It is essential also that the Government are prepared to use the full rigour of the law against the terrorist organisations.

The Minister responsible for security has equated requests that my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, North made for more resolute action on the security front with a request that the security forces should act outside the law. That was not the case. The security forces must act within the law. But if the law is not adequate to allow the security forces to deal with the terrorism, it is necessary to frame new legislation and give them additional powers.

It is essential that there should be tougher sentences. There should be minimum or mandatory sentences, so that the courts can ensure that those who are involved are put away for a time that fits the crime that they have committed.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I am sure that my hon. Friend's attention has been drawn to the case in our courts yesterday. Although they were not charged with murder, five men killed a constituent and friend of mine by

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

ambushing a car. What did they get? None of them got more than four years. When the Northern Ireland Office was questioned by the press, it confirmed:

"Most of those sentenced will be free in just over two years".

Does my hon. Friend appreciate the outrage of Thomas McNabney and the whole family at the way in which the matter has been handled and especially at the sentences? Young Ivor was doing a Christian job in charity, and was so killed.

Mr. Robinson: I certainly can concur with my hon. Friend's remarks. Last night on television, I saw the sad sight of the father of the young man being interviewed. How can anyone ever justify a sentence of four years? The life of the killed man is worth only four years of the life of his killer. There can be no justification for such a light sentence. I trust that those with authority in the House will consider reviewing it. It is essential that a tough sentence should be given to those involved in such a killing.

In addition to the necessity for tougher action against terrorists, it is important that those with responsibility for the security forces at grass roots level make full use of the powers that already exist. About two weeks ago, on a Wednesday evening at about 11.15, the Royal Irish Regiment carried out a number of road stops in the markets areas of Belfast. In effect, the regiment closed off the whole of the markets area.

During the road stops, a gunman opened fire on a soldier and attempted to kill him. He shot the soldier through the face. The soldier was taken to intensive care in a local hospital. The RIR had sufficient personnel on the ground to carry out a house-to-house search of the area. There was a divisional mobile support unit in the nearby Musgrave street police station.

The person in charge of the regiment asked for permission to conduct a house-to-house search of the area to get the gunman who had attempted to kill one of his soldiers and the weapon. Both the gunman and the weapon will undoubtedly be used in further attempts to kill, if not in killings. Permission was refused by an assistant chief constable. If we are to win the war against terrorism, surely we must allow our security forces to deal with the issues when they are on the ground and have the capability to do so.

The Secretary of State said that the security forces are not handcuffed in any way. I have given one example of where they were handcuffed and were not allowed to do the job. The colleagues of the young man had to sit back and not take action that would have apprehended the man responsible for attempting to kill one of them.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The hon. Gentleman misrecalls what I said. I said that the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary had referred to frequent assertions in the wake of one terrorist outrage after another that the security forces are handcuffed and that the handcuffs should be removed. The Chief Constable went on to say that there was no restraint of any kind whatever imposed from any political quarter on what the RUC can do in the defence of law.

Mr. Robinson: Indeed, in my example it was not the political chiefs who were handcuffing the RIR, but the assistant chief constable. The community has a right to know why the assistant chief constable refused permission to the RIR to carry out a house-to-house search to find the person who attempted to kill a soldier and remove the weapon used.

In conclusion, after a quarter of a century of terrorism in Northern Ireland, far from being defeated, it is stronger than it has ever been. It is stronger because of a Government policy that encourages those who are involved in terrorism by making concessions and appeasing them. It has grown stronger because tough, resolute security initiatives have not been taken against terrorists.

In 25 years' time, Members of this House will gather once more and say to themselves and each other, "Isn't it terrible how terrorism continues in Northern Ireland?" Terrorism will continue until this failed Government security policy is put to rest and a new initiative is taken to defeat terrorists through tough, resolute military action.

5.54 pm

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): Reference has been made to 25 years on several occasions. The House will forgive me if I start further back than that at the very foundation of the state 72 years ago. From its very foundation the north of Ireland has never had anything other than emergency legislation. It was then called the Special Powers Act.

From the very day and hour that the state was formed it has been sustained by draconian emergency legislation, military might, soldiers, not one police service but on certain occasions two and on others three, and by the inpouring of billions of pounds—according to the Secretary of State, £3·5 billion last year.

There is a fundamental question to be asked outside of the legalities of the emergency provisions legislation, of the statistics and of the emotions that it engenders. Where a state or a statelet is formed with the weight of the British Government behind it in military and financial terms and in terms of the emergency provisions legislation, the Prevention of Terrorism Acts and the Special Powers Act and still the problem remains, is there not a fundamental question to ask?

Is it not even more fundamental to ask why, after 72 years, all those measures have never brought peace, stability or unity of purpose to the north of Ireland? There is something much more fundamental than the points that have been made about terrorist violence, statistics and the legalities of the Act, as my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) admirably pointed out.

The question must be repeated: will the north of Ireland for as long as it lasts in its present form require armies to sustain it, lookout posts to defend it, emergency provisions Acts, prevention of terrorism Acts and billions of pounds per year? That is the question that we should be asking ourselves. That question is at the heart of this debate.

The Father of the House made a valiant attempt to face up to it and the House of Commons should face up to it. Year after year we skirt around the subject. We do not deal with the core of the problem because the core hurts. It is much easier to indulge ourselves in self-righteousness, righteous anger or whatever emotion happens to be taking us.

After 72 years, has not the 1921 arrangement that set up the north of Ireland failed abysmally to deliver peace,

stability, economic well-being and a future for the people there? Is it not an artificial entity that can be sustained only by this type of militarism and emergency legislation? Is it not further the case that until fundamental changes are made in that arrangement violence, unrest and political instability will continue whether we like it or not? That is a core problem and it is not popular to say so in the House.

It is strange that I have yet to meet a Member who, when I talk to him privately over a cup of tea or something stronger, does not ask the same question that I am asking now: is it not the case that the north of Ireland constitutional arrangement of 1921 is not capable of being sustained except by military might, repressive legislation and what we have seen during the past 2 years? That is one of the issues that the House must start to consider.

The fundamental reasons for failure are not the Army, the police, the courts or the Ministers because we have had all kinds of generals, Chief Constables and Ministers and God knows how many regiments of soldiers. They cannot all be equally bad. It is not their fault. They are put in a situation where they have to sustain the unsustainable and make the unworkable work. Unless we face that problem and make the fundamental changes that are required, more Ministers will go over to Northern Ireland to suffer the same type of frustration and failure, more hon. Members like us will come and suffer the same frustration as that to which we give vent here and more people will have worse to deal with—their lives will be lost.

We must all face up, honestly, to a number of false premises. One is inherent in the order. One cannot make the legal process solve what are essentially political problems, but that is what has been attempted. A political problem is staring us in the face and has been doing so since 1921. An attempt has been made to use the law to solve it. The only way in which that can be done, however, is by diminishing, bending and retarding the law. It has been made to do something that it is simply not geared to do. As long as we keep tinkering with the law to try to make it do just that, we will do more damage to its integrity and the process of law.

The law does not exist to solve political problems. It exists for different reasons. That is the first premise which must be challenged when we consider the emergency legislation.

The second false premise that must be considered is the erroneous view that, somehow or other, if one has a problem such as that which exists in Northern Ireland and if one throws more troops and police at it, builds more Army installations and lookout posts, pours more billions of pounds into it and makes more emergency laws, as the Chief Constable recommends that we should do, that will result in more successful policing, greater intelligence information, more arrests and less terrorism. We need only listen to the speech of the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) to be convinced that the more one does that, the more one adds to terrorism.

An erroneous paradox exists in Northern Ireland—the greater the intensity of security, the more the community suffers; the more that community suffers, the less the police are able to gather real intelligence from it. That means that the terrorist is laughing all the way to his next atrocity because he knows the political reality.

The terrorist also knows that the security operation in Northern Ireland, perhaps through no fault of its own or misdirection, but because of the fundamental flaw in its purpose, has strangled its own capacity for detection. The security arrangements are defeating their own purpose. One need only look at the figures relating to those charged with terrorist offences who come from the mainstream Catholic areas and the mainstream Protestant areas to realise that that is the case. Intelligence information is not coming through to the police because the security operation has strangled itself. The gap between the police and the community has grown to such an extent that that intelligence information is simply not there, despite what people will say.

When are we ever going to address that fundamental flaw in the security operation? When will we realise that there is a problem with policing in the north of Ireland —not with the police. That problem is a political, historical, ideological reactive one. It is for that reason that the IRA can operate in my constituency, almost impervious to the battery of security that operates around it. That is why the IRA was able to move down to Cullaville village, right under one of the look-out posts which houses all the most sophisticated observation equipment, and take it over for two hours with huge machine guns. The Army personnel stood up in their look-out post and watched.

I do not blame the Army for not coming down, but I blame the people who put them up in that observation post. I blame those who have created a situation in which fools are being made not just of the soldiers, the Ministers and myself but of the entire community. That community now realises the strength of the position that we all, in our own way, have given to the terrorists. We must face up to that fact because we are faced continuously with such behaviour by terrorists.

Until we realise that there is a fundamental problem with policing, as it affects the nationalist community, we will not solve that problem. That will also make it much more difficult to solve the other extraneous problems.

The rake's progress continues. Every year we all say the same things. Every year we have a knee-jerk reaction to this order. If one is feeling in a good mood, one tries to soften that reaction slightly, but if one is a bad mood, one tries to tell the truth. Telling the truth in a political forum is not always the most advisable thing to do, but that is much more healthy than to have the type of ritual dance on the problems that we have once a year while ignoring their roots.

I began by referring to the Special Powers Act. Let us remind ourselves what John Vorster, Minister of Justice in South Africa, said when he introduced the Coercion Bill:

> "I would be willing to exchange all the legislation of that sort for one clause in the Northern Ireland Special Powers Act."

What has changed since then?

It is interesting to consider that Act. I know that the Minister will go away and read it. The power to arrest without a warrant and to be held for 48 hours for interrogation is included in the EPA and it was also added to the Special Powers Act. Internment without trial, powers of search and entry without warrant, the prohibition of the right of assembly and the outlawing of organisations was also permitted under those two Acts. Exclusion orders, would the House believe it, are permitted under the Special Powers Act and the PTA. A prohibition on the holding of inquests is not set down in statute, but operates in practice. Such is the relationship between the Northern Ireland EPA and the order that we are debating tonight.

[Mr. Seamus Mallon]

One can see clearly that the legislation may have been softened at the edges and that changes have been made —I admit that the paragraph about which Vorster talked has been changed fundamentally—but it is the same animal with furry boots. It has existed since 1921.

Mr. Molyneaux: Would the hon. Gentleman be generous enough to look to the southern end of the island where he will find that the same kind of legislation was introduced to protect that state from its enemies within? Is it not a fact that very similar legislation currently operates in the Irish Republic, including something even equivalent to provisions for internment?

Mr. Mallon: I accept that point. We would not have the problem if the legislation in the south had succeeded. Emergency legislation in the south has failed as much as ours. The problem there is the same as ours. There is a fundamental political flaw within the island of Ireland, from which those in the south suffer as we do. No matter how often people are interned or how much emergency legislation is introduced, those in the south have the same problem as we have. Unfortunately, we share the same failure.

Are we progressing at all? The most depressing things that I have seen for a long time were the recommendations by the Chief Constable about additional powers, which we must consider closely. One recommendation was the removal of the right to silence when questioned about a crime. In *The Independent* on Wednesday 2 June, a well known QC in this city, Anthony Scrivener, said of the Asil Nadir case that the powers given to the Serious Fraud Office were the widest powers of

"any British institution since the Star Chamber".

That is the view of an eminent QC in London. He should make the EPA and the PTA his bedroom reading for at least a few nights, because it is the very right to silence—the refusal to answer questions—which the Chief Constable said should become an offence. Where is the difference? We are supposed to be part of Britain. We are supposed to share the benefits and advantages, but the Chief Constable of the north of Ireland makes that demand in the face of the legal opinion of Anthony Scrivener.

The Chief Constable also states that accomplice evidence should be more readily admissible. We saw what accomplice evidence did to the court system and the north of Ireland. We know how many people are running about in the north of Ireland and here as a result of accomplice evidence which simply could not be sustained. The Chief Constable wants to reintroduce that provision.

The Chief Constable also states that the burden of proof in defined circumstances should shift to the accused. The most basic legal principle that has existed in the western world is to be jettisioned because the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary believes that, unless a person convicts himself, it will be impossible successfully to bring a case against him. Is that not pushing the panic button and doing something dreadful to the legal process? Does it not further demean the law? Is it not an admission from the Chief Constable that, unless the accused is placed in a position where he will make a confession or condemn himself out of his own mouth, the Chief Constable will be incapable of obtaining the evidence necessary to put the accused behind bars if he is guilty? That is what the Chief Constable is saying.

The Chief Constable is right—one figure shows that 86 per cent. of those charged and convicted under emergency legislation are convicted on their own evidence. If we pursue that line, the law in the north of Ireland will be in tatters. If we take the action recommended by the hon. Members for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe) and for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble), we shall further diminish the law to a point way beyond the Special Powers Act begun in 1921. Surely, that would not be progress and that is not the way to advance.

I know that the Secretary of State is a wise and learned lawyer and I believe that he has a respect for the law derived from his profession. I know that he would share my view that, not only is the law too precious to be left to lawyers, but it is much too precious to be left to policemen. It should be guarded by all hon. Members so that we do not allow even the consideration of such possibilities. When I read the Chief Constable's analysis it made me despair almost as much as I despair of the terrorism that he is trying to prevent.

Internment is still on the statute book, and I shall not describe its history, or its merits or demerits in detail. All I say is that we must get rid of internment if only to get rid of the knee jerk reactions that we see every time a particularly bad atrocity is committed. We should do so because at least we would take such venom out of the air.

The notion that internment can work successfully in modern society is based on the belief that there are those within the governmental, policing, army or intelligence systems who know who are committing the terrible acts. There are politicians in the House and people outside the House who believe that, but it is not true. It is time that we addressed the issue of internment. We should get it out of the way because sooner or later some of us, whether we are in Government or Opposition, will have to start putting Humpty Dumpty together again. We cannot do that on the basis of a further diminishing of the law.

I shall recount an incident involving the issue of search and arrest. A few weeks ago two young men in my constituency had the milking machine on in their milking parlour as they were ready to go milking. A section of the Army arrived in their yard and asked them for proof of identity. The young men were dressed for milking cows and were not carrying proof of identity in their own milking parlour so could not make it available to the Army. They were bundled into a Land Rover and, after receiving considerable abuse, they were taken to Markethill police station.

I was immediately informed of the incident. Those young men were arrested under the emergency provisions legislation and the Prevention of Terrorism Act. When I made inquiries, the young men were being released. When I talked to the police it was obvious that they did not believe one word of the soldiers. It was the second time that the family had been treated in such a way. On the first occasion, I was in correspondence with the Minister. I reported the incident to the police, whose views I received. I reported it to the brigadier in charge of the area and the Anglo-Irish Conference. Not one person within the system has been able to say that it was wrong that the event should have occurred and that the soldiers involved would be dealt with. There has been no redress.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) is smirking—he is enjoying this. It is such abuse of the legislation that is throwing people into the arms of the provisional IRA. I have never raised a specific case on the Floor of the House before and I probably shall not do so again. However, when such a case is fed into the system, but that system is impotent and cannot protect the rights of people against the excesses carried out under such legislation, it makes me despair, not just of the system, but of the legislation.

One could speak for ever—I shall not—about elements of the legislation. I shall simply make the same point that I have made every year since I entered the House. Do we want to solve the problem or do we want military victory over the IRA, the UVF, the UDA and whatever else? It is worth thinking about that. Do we want peace and a solution, or do we want to respond to the type of Kiplingesque demands that are consistently made?

6.20 pm

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): I listened with care to the remarks of the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon). Although it was by no means the first time that I have heard him speak, never before had I heard him so strident and intransigent, and I found his remarks depressing. I saw them, first and foremost, as a bleak, ill omen for any hope at some time in the future of restarting the constitutional talks.

If those are the hon. Gentleman's attitudes—of course, he means what he says—one can only conclude that he sees the nationalist community as continuing to be a source, and a provider of succour, for those men of violence, unless the nationalist community gets its own way. What hope is there for normalisation, with that sort of attitude running through? His is a thesis that is devoid of hope.

A degree of repetition inevitably characterises these annual debates on the renewal of the provisions of the emergency provisions Act and the prevention of terrorism Act. I am aware that what I say may reflect what I have said in the past. If I am open to that charge, I am sure that the same charge can be levelled against other hon. Members.

Given the tragic fact of the continuation of violence in Northern Ireland by the IRA and various republican groupings on the one hand and, on the other, by so-called loyalist groupings, there is no alternative other than to give the measures our approval, and we should be failing in our duty if we did not do so.

For that reason, I deeply regret the attitude of Opposition Members. I understand their reservations about a number of features in the provisions, but they are making the wrong conclusion in jumping from those reservations to a position of not supporting them. As the saying goes, that gives the wrong signals to this country and especially to the IRA.

I give my full and unequivocal support to the continuance order. I note with interest the unequivocal support given also at various stages by Lord Colville. I cannot recall him writing so succinctly as he writes on page 4:

"It is impossible to disagree with those who advise that the Act is still needed."

He later adds:

"Any diminution of the determination or capability on the part of the Government and the Security Forces to prevent these crimes or catch the criminals could merely act as an invitation to the opposing faction".

I particularly welcome his further comment:

"the impact of the EPA is not so dramatic as to affect the majority of the law-abiding public to any great extent."

That suggests that the right balance is being maintained. It adds to my confidence in the continuance order and the other measures. Such measures are demanded by the circumstances and we should be failing in our duty if we did not support them. Any infringement of civil liberties must be accepted with regret as necessary and right.

A few points in the report particularly struck me. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State referred in his opening remarks to the first of the major recommendations, on page 5:

"The Government should give consideration to introducing custody time limits for all persons on remand for indictable offences".

I welcomed my right hon. and learned Friend's comments on that point and I believe that we are moving in the right direction.

Some of the evidence that has come my way about the situation in Northern Ireland has led me particularly to welcome the sixth recommendation in the report, that

"the Government should consider introducing a code of practice on 'stop and search' under the EPA."

I have felt for some time that that matter demanded attention.

I was grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for enabling me to intervene in his speech to mention the matter of greatest concern to me—measures relating to the confiscation of terrorist funds. I sincerely hope that the amendments will close any existing loophole and that soon there will be something to show for those measures.

It is obvious that terrorism flourishes, among other things, on its financial support, its financial means and its ability to finance its operations. It is regrettable that there has been little action in that respect in the past, but I hope that the reassurances and optimism that characterised my right hon. and learned Friend's speech will soon become reality.

I give a warm welcome to the measures, which I believe will again play an important part in combating terrorism.

6.25 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I am happy to speak following the hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter). Like him, I have come to the conclusion that, unpalatable though it is that there should be a continuing need for measures of this kind, it would send the wrong signals if the House were not to agree to the continuance order.

It cannot be easy for anyone to work up enthusiasm for the measures. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) said much with which I agreed. I cannot believe that any hon. Member feels enthusiastic or gung-ho about the measures or believes that, as the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) put it, we are doing other than going through the annual ritual of agreeing to the measures. Yet, as I say, it would send the wrong signals not to approve them. We have a duty to continue to maintain what order we can in Northern Ireland and accept that, as Lord Colville says in his report, there is no other choice but to maintain our security and military presence there to ensure that civil war does not break out in Northern Ireland.

Lord Colville comes to the depressing conclusion—perhaps it is the most that he is able to say—that life is

[Mr. David Alton]

simply liveable in Northern Ireland. In the same vein, our agreeing to the renewal of the measures tonight merely represents our minimalist objective of allowing life there to be just about liveable.

Surely we can do better than that, and this is where I disagree with some of the remarks of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath). He talked about excluding members of the Democratic Unionist party—for example, the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley)—from the talks process, if that would ensure that some sort of easy agreement could more rapidly be reached.

It would be absurd to exclude people from any part of the community in Northern Ireland. The hon. Member for Belfast, East spoke with passion and vigour, as he always does on such occasions, about the reality of life for people in the unionist part of the community. In the same way, the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) spoke with passion and vigour about the effects of terrorism on the people he represents in the nationalist part of the community in Northern Ireland. No great prizes would be won by excluding either side from the talks process.

Surely we yearn for the day when Sinn Fein renounces violence and becomes part of the process. Let us remember that "Sinn Fein" means "ourselves alone." That sums up the whole problem of people who simply want to look after themselves and their own interests. We desperately need not to exclude people but to listen carefully to what all parts of the community are saying.

Reversing the blood bath and having another alienated group of people in Northern Ireland—on this occasion, the unionist community rather than the nationalists, who have been alienated in the past—would not solve any problems. That is why I believe that the process of talks, difficult though it is, and the process of political progress with which the Secretary of State has so steadfastly persevered, are the right way ahead.

Mr. Mallon: I had hoped to make this point in my speech, but I forgot to do so. Just in case there is any misunderstanding, I am not in favour of excluding anyone from anything. Any future talks must be inclusive and include everyone possible. I certainly have no desire to exclude anyone.

Mr. Alton: I am reassured, although not surprised, to hear the hon. Gentleman say that. He must be right. We need the maximum involvement of everyone in Northern Ireland to make political progress. We have to deal with the democratic deficit there.

Although political progress alone may not overcome terrorism—on this, I agree with the hon. Member for Belfast, East—unless we fill the political vacuum we will continue to be in trouble. Such progress can be brought about only by real leadership on the part of the politicians of Northern Ireland, all of whom I admire as individuals. I have visited many of their constituencies and have seen for myself what they have to endure.

I am amazed by their personal stamina and courage in the face of so much tragedy. I enormously admire the way they represent their constituents' interests and their stance against terrorism.

I imagine that, as the years pass, all that must take its toll—day after day, they hear of friends, relatives, neighbours or political associates being killed. It would be surprising indeed if, after all this has gone on remorselessly, they could be expected to come here and participate like members of a friendly debating society. It is remarkable that they can co-operate as much as they do

Cardinal Daly, in his booklet "Dialogue for Peace", put it very well:

> "The problem in Northern Ireland is fundamentally a political one. It is the problem of establishing credible institutions of government able to win the allegiance and merit the trust of both communities."

The security problem mirrors that, too. The security institutions must win the trust and confidence of both sides of the community. There is no doubt that confidence is undermined and that the cause of reconciliation is jeopardised by events such as the Stalker affair and the cases of Annie Maguire, the Guildford Four and the Birmingham Six. If these emergency powers lead to any abuses in Northern Ireland, they will continue to endanger opportunities for political progress.

Earlier, the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) intervened to highlight the case of John Matthews. In common with other hon. Members who have been following the work done by the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) on behalf of John Matthews, I have received a letter from his uncle, Danny Kelly. Speaking of his nephew, he writes:

> "My nephew has never been in trouble with the law before in his life. This is his first time ever being brought before a court. Since John graduated in Geography from Queens University, Belfast in 1992 he has been working and living openly in London with his aunt in Wood Green, north London."

John was put in an identity parade, in which he agreed to take part to try to dispel allegations against him. The witness did not positively pick him out. In his letter, Danny Kelly says:

> "The witness was convinced that John was not one of two persons who hijacked his taxi and his remarks at this ID parade clearly expressed that. It has now just become known to us that this ID evidence has now been withdrawn by the police at the latest court hearing."

Mr. Kelly continues:

> "The forensic evidence also raises doubts because it has not been clearly defined by the police, and due to the unreliability of forensic allegations in previous cases one has to ask again why the police proceeded in this case".

The Irish Times of 27 May states:

> "According to Irish community activists in London, the 11 people arrested after the April 24th NatWest bombing included a young man who left Belfast earlier this year after the IRA had shot dead his brother. Irish community groups fear that there may be a recurrence of the events of the mid-1970s when the British police forces felt under pressure to respond with arrests to IRA outrages."

If a mistake has been made in this case—I cannot say whether one has been—we should listen to the representations such as those from Mr. Kelly. So as to ensure that the security forces are not further undermined by the conviction or attempted conviction of the wrong person, I hope that the Secretary of State will be open to that.

For the future, we need a far more credible system to uphold the administration of law. Surely the logic of the Anglo-Irish process leads to the idea of a joint security commission, and perhaps some system of examining magistrates who can probe cases of the sort that I have described. In the long term, I would also like joint courts and the joint enactment of legislation such as that under discussion here. The Dail should be asked to pass identical

legislation concurrently. That would show that both Parliaments are committed to the cause of extinguishing terrorism and of cherishing the democratic ideal.

We must also redouble our efforts to deal with the financing of terrorism. It is an oxygen line that pumps money into organisations such as the IRA, much of it from the United States of America. After the terrible Warrington outrage, I met Mr. Colin Parry, one of the most courageous men I have ever met. His boy was killed in that bombing. He has indicated his wish to go to north America to tell people there what happens to families who get caught up in acts of terrorism.

Within days of Mr. Parry's statement to that effect, it was traduced by members of Noraid. In *The Irish People*, Martin Galvin tried to turn Mr. Parry's statement on its head. Downing street was good enough to send me a copy of the report which appeared in *The Irish People* after I wrote to the Prime Minister telling him of Colin Parry's initiative. Noraid had quite erroneously tried to give the impression that the British Government were launching a propaganda exercise to try to capitalise on the deaths at Warrington.

We have to realise what we are up against, but it is right to encourage people such as Colin Parry and Susan McHugh, whom I visited in Dublin recently. She and thousands of ordinary people in Ireland and in this country are saying that they have had enough of this terrorism—here, I echo the remarks of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup—and they deserve a response with all the force that we can muster. We must particularly ensure that the funding that still pours into the terrorist organisations is stopped.

After two years of the operation of the new laws, there have as yet been no convictions or sequestration of funds from terrorist groups. We know that many of them are involved in thuggery and gangsterism of the worst sort —not unlike that of the Mafia. This goes way beyond the terrorism that emerged 20 years ago after the civil rights demonstrations. It is essential that we get to grips with it and ensure that the money used by these organisations is reinvested in the work towards reconciliation that needs to be undertaken throughout these islands.

This is not an Irish problem. William Gladstone pointed out how extraordinary it was that the genius of the British people had failed them in this one area, and it has continued to fail them over the century that has passed since then. The solution has continued to elude us. It is absurd that in this one remaining corner of western Europe the old hatreds and the twin houses of hatred and terrorism should persist, enmeshing and embroiling so many of us.

I am proud to hold, besides my British citizenship, Irish citizenship, because of my mother's origins. I am proud that my three children hold Irish citizenship too. There is so much in both our traditions of which we should be proud. We must build on the things that we hold in common as Europeans. That is how to combat this terrorist plague and to get our relationships right. Unless we do that, we shall come back here year after year into infinity to renew orders of this kind.

6.39 pm

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): I listened with great interest to the Father of the House, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath)—as I do whenever he makes a contribution in the Chamber—but I disagree with his implication that we should exclude a party in Northern Ireland from any future constitutional talks about the way in which the Province is to be governed. I understand the right hon. Gentleman's frustration with the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. I. Paisley); I feel it myself. I think that the hon. Member for Antrim, North should not persist in his preconditions for the resumption of talks, but that should not in any way prevent his party from taking part in the talks which I very much hope the Secretary of State will begin as soon as possible.

I have listened with interest, and some disappointment, to the debate. As on previous occasions, we have heard, unfortunately, the Government rehearsing their all-too-familiar arguments in respect of emergency legislation. During this debate—and probably more so in the debate on renewing the Prevention of Terrorism Act—some Conservative Members seemed to imply that the Labour party is somehow soft on terrorism because we have legitimate differences with the Secretary of State on the issue of emergency legislation.

Hon. Members who have known us for long enough will know that my hon. Friends and I find that attitude contemptible. I wish to place on record, on behalf of the leader of my party and the shadow Northern Ireland team, that we utterly condemn terrorism, whoever the perpetrator. Some Conservative Members do the people of Northern Ireland a disservice by suggesting that the House is not totally united in its abhorrence of terrorist atrocities.

Dr. Joé Hendron (Belfast, West): Does the hon. Gentleman agree, in terms of the legislation and its application, that on the streets of areas like west Belfast, Strabane, Newry and ordinary towns and cities, it is important that the security forces and the police treat young people with dignity? To do otherwise is morally wrong and counter-productive, because in such circumstances the security forces become the recruiting sergeants for the Provisional IRA and the UDA.

Mr. Stott: I agree with the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron), who represents an area where there is an inordinate level of security force activity—not just once a week, but practically every day. I will have more to say about that later.

Together with my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), I pay tribute to the security forces in Northern Ireland—who deserve all our support—and to the prison service and the judiciary, who inevitably have to carry out their duties in a very hostile environment. Without their commitment the situation in Northern Ireland would undoubtedly be far worse.

Every Member of the House is elected to represent the interests, and protect the freedoms, of his or her constituents. It is also the responsibility of each right hon. and hon. Member fully to justify any curtailment of those civil rights. As the Opposition have consistently stated, the Labour party accepts that there may be a case for emergency powers in order to maximise the fight against terrorism in Northern Ireland. It believes, however, that certain provisions in the order are unacceptable—and unacceptable use of emergency legislation does more to undermine democratic credibility than to combat terrorism.

[Mr. Stott]

As my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North said, the Labour party has long called for the visual and sound recording of interviews. He explained that measures can be taken to ensure that material of a sensitive nature is not released. This method of interview would not only protect the suspect, but furnish the security forces with evidence that could be used to refute any allegations made against them—which I feel is very important. The Government allow this practice in the rest of the United Kingdom; why are they not prepared to allow it in Northern Ireland? The Labour party believes that the Secretary of State should ensure adequate safeguards for both the accused and the accuser. Should the Government—after the Secretary of State's careful consideration of the matter—refuse to introduce video or audio taping of interviews, many people in Northern Ireland will be legitimately entitled to ask the Government what they have got to hide.

It is not only the failure to provide adequate safeguards in interviews that denies the people of Northern Ireland access to basic human rights; what the Labour party cannot accept are the powers contained in the legislation and in the Prevention of Terrorism Act which enable the Government to detain suspects in Northern Ireland without charge.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North said, if an Executive erodes the basic rights of a substantial swathe of its own citizens—however admirable its objectives may be in doing so—the limitations that it seeks to place on democracy serve only to hurt the majority of law-abiding citizens. The Government are suspending the rule of law against which the terrorists are so vehemently fighting. In a democratic society, such a move represents a victory only for the tactics of terror.

It is because of these and other fundamental differences —which my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North and the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) set out in graphic detail—that we cannot support the legislation as it stands. The continuing problems in Northern Ireland have, sadly, not been met by an adaptable or appropriate response from the Government.

Twenty years ago, temporary measures were hurriedly introduced in an attempt to tackle the desperate situation in Northern Ireland. Now, 20 years later, advanced media techniques continue to bring, with disturbing clarity, the murders of innocent people and the carnage of bombed towns into our living rooms. That should send the strongest possible signal to the Government, who have presided over this tragedy for the past 14 years, that the annual review of tired legislation is not enough and is clearly not working.

It is with a profound sense of regret that we are unable to find a consensus on this most important matter. I fully understand the position taken by some Northern Ireland Members on the question of emergency powers—they and their constituents have been in the front line of terrorist atrocities for over 20 years—but when emergency powers such as those contained in the order erode people's basic civil liberties, and given the corrosive effect that that has on the vast majority of both communities in Northern Ireland, the Labour party cannot, regrettably, support renewal of this order.

6.48 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Michael Mates): The House has had the opportunity to give full consideration to the powers in place to continue the fight against the terrorists in Northern Ireland—powers which remain necessary and will be used resolutely as long as terrorism persists.

Many interesting and worthwhile points have been made during the debate. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) welcomed, as I did, the prospect of a change to the extradition laws in the Republic of Ireland. An undertaking has been given and we look forward to that becoming less of a thorny problem as a result of the change in the law. The hon. Gentleman said that the only reason why he advised his party to vote against the legislation was that internment was on the statute book, and the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) gave some other reasons.

The requirement to have internment available has to be there. It is not just in Northern Ireland, but in the Republic of Ireland. It is a legacy of the days when it was used on both sides of the border. My right hon. and learned Friend has no intention of introducing it in the present circumstances, but not to have it there as a fallback if circumstances demand it would be neglectful and the Government are not prepared to allow that to happen.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) talked about the independent assessor. On that matter he is plain wrong. He will see that the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991 says:

"The Independent Assessor—

(b) shall receive and investigate any representations concerning those procedures;

(c) may investigate the operation of those procedures in relation to any particular complaint or group of complaints;

(d) may require the GOC to review any particular case or group of cases in which the Independent Assessor considers any of those procedures to have operated inadequately".

Therefore, the powers that he complained were not there, are there.

Mr. McNamara: With respect, the Minister has misquoted me. The substance of my complaint is that the independent assessor may look only at procedural matters. He may not look at the substance of the complaints. That is still the position and it is what Lord Colville says. Looking at the procedures is not sufficient.

Mr. Mates: If that is the hon. Gentleman's view, we must leave it there.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) made a notable intervention. He asked about the difference between the problems we face and the problem faced by other European countries. I can answer that in one word. It is the border. The border provides an opportunity for terrorists to move between two police forces and two legal systems. That is what makes the problem so difficult.

The figures for the past 10 years show that the RUC's border subdivisions, which have only 19 per cent. of the Province's population, have had 40 per cent. of all the deaths as a result of the security problems. They have had

over 50 per cent. of all the explosives used and almost 30 per cent. of shootings. That is the uncomfortable and difficult fact. It does not mean that we are not working as hard as we can, with the security forces and the Government in the Republic, to try to overcome the problem, but to fail to mention it would be to ignore one of the real issues we face in trying to come to terms, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup put it, with the terrorist problem in Northern Ireland.

My right hon. Friend also mentioned a central anti-terrorist body. There has been a great deal of argument about that over recent months. It is chiefly a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. My right hon. Friend the Father of the House said that it needs to be looked at by a higher level of Government. I can assure him that during the 13 months in which I have been doing this job it has been given a great deal of attention by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Committee on Northern Ireland, which is a new feature since the general election. I can assure my right hon. Friend that the Prime Minister is taking a close interest in this matter, as are senior members of the Government of the Republic. It is through that increased co-operation and determination that we look to more success in the future.

The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) echoed some of the Chief Constable's words about the changes in the law and mentioned the remarks of the chairman of the Police Federation this morning. He may be aware of what the chairman of the Police Federation said, but I am not sure that he knows what my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State said in reply. His words will be on the record and will be reported tomorrow, so I shall not repeat them.

Several hon. Members have mentioned the intimidation of lawyers. Our position on that is clear. If it is taking place, it is wrong. It is unacceptable and we will not tolerate it. However, if it is taking place, we must be given evidence. The problem is that it is repeated from body to body, the most notable being one from the United States, and it is alleged as if it is a proven fact. If it is happening, we would like to have evidence. It is intolerable in any society, especially ours. However, such evidence has not been forthcoming and, until it is, we can do nothing but condemn it if it is happening and long for the day when evidence will be produced.

The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley objected to the phrase:

"Nothing is agreed until everything is agreed."

He may find that phrase objectionable, but he agreed to it before the talks began. It was on the basis of his agreement that the talks took place. As he knows, the talks lasted for some months and made more progress than he suspected would have been the case at the start.

The hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) gave us a familiar diatribe against the Anglo-Irish Agreement, calling it a concession to violence and saying that it was the concession of joint authority. Once again I must tell him that he is wrong. The agreement states specifically that its provisions imply no derogation from the sovereignty of either state and nobody has said anything like the remarks that the hon. Gentleman claimed have been made.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) mentioned the case of one of his constituents and the report of what had happened in court. It is a tragic case. However, for the security forces, the car was stoned by a group of youths. Those responsible were quickly arrested. They were brought to trial on various charges, including manslaughter, for which the available penalty is a sentence of life imprisonment. What happens thereafter cannot be the responsibility of the RUC, the Government or the Northern Ireland Office. It is a matter for the courts. The courts are independent. They heard the evidence and took a decision, which is as the hon. Gentleman stated. That is not something for which we can be blamed.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) raised the takeover by the IRA of Cullaville. It was not seen by the security forces in the tower because that area is in dead ground. Had the security forces seen it, they would certainly have reported it and something might have been done about it. However, it could also have been a come-on. The hon. Gentleman is experienced enough to know that the IRA is up to all sorts of ruses such as that. For the hon. Gentleman to suggest that the security forces saw it and did nothing does them a disservice and is not the truth.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned Markethill and the complaint that he said that he has raised with me. He did not mention the constituent's name. If he provides me with the name, I shall have the case looked into and write to him. Without that knowledge, it is difficult to say anything here.

My hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) talked about the delays in justice. We have been working hard on that. The working party looking into the delays has made a great deal of progress in identifying where they are. There will be resource implications which we will have to look at when the time comes. I hope that as a result of the work that we have done in the past nine months we can reduce considerably the delays in bringing people to trial, as that is a bad part of the administration of justice now.

My hon. Friend mentioned the terrorist finance unit, as did many other hon. Members. We are well on the way to achieving some success there. It is a complex matter and it is better to proceed slowly and succeed than to proceed in haste or under pressure and to fail. Therefore, I must ask hon. Members to be patient.

I must tell the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) that we are not gung-ho when we bring these provisions to the House. The day that my right hon. and learned Friend and I feel that we do not need to ask for the provisions to be renewed will be the happiest in our time at the Northern Ireland Office. We do this because it is fundamentally necessary.

The hon. Member for Mossley Hill was rather too gloomy when he said that life is livable in Northern Ireland. It is a great deal more than that. A great deal of life in Northern Ireland is very good and for many people life is normal. Their spirit is remarkable, but their life, jobs and prosperity are better than some would have us believe. I do not want the message to go out that all is gloom there because as far as I am concerned it is certainly not.

The application for the powers may cause inconvenience, but at the end of the day we shall have to implement them resolutely and, given the circumstances, as sensitively as possible in pursuit of the Government's first aim in Northern Ireland—the eradication of terrorism.

One day it may no longer be necessary, but until that time comes the legislation must remain in place. That is why it is impossible to understand why the official

[Mr. Mates]

Opposition cannot support us. They bring one or two minor points to our attention, but without the legislation the terrorists would have far greater opportunities to wreak the havoc that they have been wreaking, and it is the duty of all hon. Members to support us in the Lobby.

It being Seven o'clock, MADAM SPEAKER *proceeded to put forthwith the Question necessary to dispose of proceedings on the motion, pursuant to Order [21 May].*

The House divided: Ayes 314, Noes 204.

Division No. 289] **[7 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, John
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*

Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Boyce, Jimmy
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Gapes, Mike
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Speller and
Mr. Jon Owen Jones.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 20th May, be approved.

Crossrail Bill *(By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): I must inform the House that the Speaker has selected the instruction in the name of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) but not the instruction in the name of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). I suggest that it may be for the convenience of the House to debate the instruction together with the motion for Second Reading:

That it be an Instruction to the Committee on the Bill that it shall have particular regard to the financial justification for Crossrail in the light of the proposals for the privatisation of British Rail, to the proposed method of financing Crossrail in the light of the Government's announcements that it should be substantially funded by the private sector, and to its interrelationship with other rail proposals across London which have been put forward since the Central London Rail Study was completed.

7.16 pm

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

It is a private Bill that we are debating this evening. It is promoted jointly by the British Railways Board and London Underground Ltd., and was deposited in the House in November 1991. As a result of further studies conducted by the promoters into the details of the proposed route, the promoters deposited an additional provision to the Bill in the House in January 1993. The promoters have statutory duties to provide or secure railway services and to co-operate with one another in the performance and exercise of their duties.

I should at this point pay tribute to the efforts of my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Mr. Sproat) who acted on behalf of the promoters of the Bill until his elevation to the ranks of the Government. I hope that the House will be reasonably tolerant of my efforts in taking over the Bill at what must stand as pretty short notice.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): Hear, hear.

Mr. Lidington: I hear my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks). I know that he will, as always, be trenchant on behalf of his constituents, whatever legislation we are debating.

The purpose of the Bill is to seek powers to construct the crossrail route. Right hon. and hon. Members will doubtless have read a considerable amount about the crossrail project, but it may be for the convenience of the House if I summarise the main purposes of the Bill.

The crossrail project was one of the recommendations of the central London rail study published in January 1989. It involves the construction of a new underground railway in twin tunnels deep underneath central London, commencing west of Paddington station and ending east of Liverpool street station. At both the eastern and western ends of this central London stretch, the new link would connect with existing railways running out, in the west, to Aylesbury and to Reading and, in the east, to Shenfield.

In the Bill, the promoters seek powers to allow for the constructions of platforms at Paddington, Bond Street, Tottenham Court Road, Farringdon and Liverpool Street, connecting with existing London Underground and British Rail stations. These works would permit interchanges with eight London underground lines and with British Rail at Paddington, Farringdon, Moorgate and Liverpool Street stations.

At Stratford, in east London, passengers would be able to change from crossrail to the docklands light railway and the proposed Jubilee line extension. The Bill also provides for other works both within the greater London area and in neighbouring counties, to enable the project to go ahead.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): May I say how welcome it is to see, in the additional provision to be inserted, that reconstruction of part of Northwood station in my constituency, with all necessary works and conveniences connected therewith, is proposed? This will be most welcome to my constituents, who will be able to get to the City and beyond to their places of work and, on occasion, for recreation. Now that it is proposed that this be in the Bill, the objections that I had to it previously can be graciously withdrawn.

Mr. Lidington: I am very grateful, as I am sure that the promoters will be, to my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood. He, too, has been very active in lobbying the promoters on behalf of his constituents, and I am glad that he is satisfied with the results of his efforts.

The objectives of the crossrail project are to relieve pressure on the most crowded sections of the Central and Metropolitan lines of London Underground and the great eastern inner suburban services of British Rail. Crossrail will also ease congestion at both Paddington and Liverpool Street stations and provide better, direct access to and from London for people in Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Hertfordshire and Essex.

I certainly know from my own constituency experience about the very strong backing for this project from the Thames Valley chamber of commerce and industry, Buckinghamshire county council and Aylesbury Vale district council, who see the crossrail route as very important for the continued prosperity of that area of the country.

In the longer term, further environmental benefits will ensue, because a good, efficient crossrail route will make it more attractive to people to travel by train to, from and under London, instead of going by road.

Crossrail also fits into a long-term pattern of adapting London's railways to meet the extra demands from passengers over the years. As the House knows, most of the present underground network was built before the second world war. Since then, London Transport has extended the Central line in 1947-49, built the Victoria line in 1969, extended the Piccadilly line to Heathrow in 1977, and, more recently, built the Jubilee line from Baker Street to Charing Cross, and the dockland light railway. British Rail has upgraded and electrified many existing routes into central London and has introduced the Thameslink service between the northern and southern halves of the capital.

So I believe that crossrail is intrinsically worth while for the immediate benefits it brings, and also provides what one might term a flexible piece of infrastructure, a keystone for the railway network to serve London and the home counties in the future.

There will be the possibility of additional connections from crossrail into new railway lines which it is proposed might be built. The service to Heathrow airport is one example. Connections to Kent via the Channel tunnel link

are another example, for that link is likely to meet crossrail just beyond Stratford, and it is perfectly feasible for a junction to be built there, which would join the Channel tunnel direct link into crossrail and the rest of the British Rail network.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): One is naturally concerned about the route in central London. The Harpur Trust has a big estate there, and I should be glad if my hon. Friend would say what route crossrail takes when it leaves Paddington station and comes to Bond street and Tottenham Court road. Does it follow Oxford street, New Oxford street and then up to Theobalds road—in other words, keep to the main arteries, so that there will be no anxiety about the stability of buildings on either side of the route—or does it cut through some of the area where it could cause building disturbances?

Mr. Lidington: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising points which I know are important to a great many of the property owners along the proposed route, who have indicated their objections and registered them by way of petition.

The proposed route would run south of Oxford street and New Oxford street, under St. Giles, and then cross Holborn at about the site of the present Holborn tube station, running parallel to Holborn, slightly north, running under Red Lion square and Gray's Inn, and then over to Farringdon station.

The promoters appreciate the concern of many people about the environmental impact of their proposals, and I would be happy to supply my hon. Friend with a copy of the very detailed environmental statement that they have produced, so that he can see exactly what is proposed for the route and the measures that the promoters wish to take to alleviate any environmental damage.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I am very much obliged to my hon. Friend for that information, and I want to trespass on his time for one moment. The route goes very close to Holborn station. Will there be an interchange at Holborn as well, because this would be extremely convenient for the area concerned?

Mr. Lidington: I am sure that the promoters of the Bill will have listened carefully to my hon. Friend and will be interested to consider the proposals that he is putting forward tonight.

The crossrail project is being designed throughout to comply with the best British Rail and London Underground standards for safety, operations and passenger comfort. Particular thought is being given in the design of rolling stock to seating and standing areas that will help disabled people—not only wheelchair users, but people with other infirmities or disabilities.

The initial plan envisages a service of 24 trains each hour in each direction during the rush hours, with capacity for up to 32 trains an hour in each direction. The plan is for crossrail, once it is operational, to run for up to 19 hours a day.

I said that the promoters had deposited with the House an additional provision to the Bill. The reason is that, since the original Bill was deposited in November 1991, the engineers and planners working for the promoters have refined their scheme and talked to a number of the residents and landowners along the proposed route. The powers sought in the additional provision are as a result of those studies. I will not list them all, although I know that the promoters will be happy to give any hon. Member with an interest in the details of the project a full explanation of their proposals.

However, to illustrate what the additional provision seeks to do, I draw the attention of the House to the proposals with regard to Harrow, where the original route plan envisaged that a small area of allotments would be taken to provide for some new sidings. Local residents objected to this and, as always, they were ably led in their lobbying by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes), whose silence in the House never precludes his active endeavours on behalf of his constituents.

As a result, the crossrail team looked again at their plans. They found a different way of achieving their original objective, and therefore incorporated a new enabling proposal in the additional provision.

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): I am a firm supporter of crossrail if it does anything to relieve the road traffic in my area. My hon. Friend mentions the extra provision. He will be aware that Moor Park, which is just up the line from the station that he has just mentioned, was in the plan, then out of the plan, and now I understand that it is back in the plan. The latest position is that the works necessary for services to stop at both Moor Park and Northwood are to be sought through parliamentary approval, but there is no firm commitment to proceed with the service stopping at Moor Park.

May I ask my hon. Friend, who has so nobly taken on this task at short notice, whether he has any information at all about whether British Rail or London Underground is thinking of providing further information about whether it will be using the two stations, or whether this is just a convenient method of getting the provision into the Bill and then not offering my constituents a service?

Mr. Lidington: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page). I feel that I have a particular interest in the points made by him and by my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson), as I spent most of my childhood in their area and know the two stations well. The promoters are seeking powers to provide a stopping service at either Northwood or Moor Park or both. They will make both a technical and a commercial assessment of which is the best of the options available.

Mr. Wilkinson: Both.

Mr. Lidington: I know that both my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West and my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood will press their case very hard. The promoters hope that they will be permitted to include the additional provision in the Bill if it is passed tonight and considered by a Select Committee.

It is quite understandable that concerns and questions should be expressed about a project of this scale, and especially about its environmental impact. As required both by the Standing Orders of the House and by European Community directives, the promoters have published environmental statements dealing both with the main Bill and with the additional provision. Copies have been deposited in the House, and those statements set out

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in detail measures that will be taken to avoid or reduce any adverse impact that the project may have on the environment.

Let me cite in particular the safeguards proposed in respect of construction of the project. All inter-station tunnelling will be done from two main work sites at either end of the central London tunnel—the first at Royal Oak, just west of Paddington, and the second at Bethnal Green, east of Liverpool Street. Large quantities of spoil will be removed, and materials will be brought in, by rail, thereby significantly reducing any need to use lorries.

The promoters are also discussing with the local authorities involved a code of construction practice that would be incorporated in construction contracts. The code would set down limitations, standards and procedures for dealing with items such as hours of working, noise, dust and air pollution, the protection of watercourses, site hoardings and safety. Effective monitoring would be carried out to ensure that the promoters' contractors complied fully with those requirements.

So far, some 314 petitions have been presented against the Bill. The promoters are now discussing the petitioners' problems with them in the usual way, to try to find a mutually satisfactory agreement in each case. The normal form of settlement is for the promoters to give the petitioner, in return for withdrawing his objection, a legally binding undertaking recording the agreement reached. Where differences cannot be resolved, the petitioners will of course be able to put their objections to the Committee considering the Bill.

I know that one matter that especially concerns some petitioners is that of compensation. The promoters' position is that they will comply fully with the compensation code now in force, or with any variation in the compensation code enacted by Parliament. As most hon. Members know, the term "compensation code" is shorthand for a considerable body of statute and case law developed over the past century and a half. The code was last reviewed by Parliament as recently as 1991, when the House passed the Planning and Compensation Act of that year.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): We all appreciate that the review was a recent review. Does my hon. Friend accept, however, that, given a scheme of the scale and likely duration of crossrail, there is likely to be a special problem, particularly as regards blight? My hon. Friend will be aware that eligibility for the service of blight notices excludes leases shorter than three years, premises with a rateable value of more than £18,000 and investment properties. He may not be aware that the owners of St. Anselm's house have already had to go into receivership because of the blight that exists. An unusually depressed rent——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that interventions are intended to be short. In this debate, each intervention has been longer than the last.

Mr. Lidington: My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) has taken a long-standing interest in these matters. I know from my own constituency casework of hard cases. I can think of an example of a business caught by the £18,000 rateable value rule which has been blighted for more than a decade by a long-delayed road scheme.

However, my hon. Friend's criticisms should be made to Ministers rather than to the crossrail promoters. It would not be right to ask the promoters alone to make special arrangements and depart from the compensation agreements laid down by Parliament. Any questions about disputed compensation should be a matter for the Lands Tribunal, which is the body set up by Parliament to deal with such questions.

Mr. Butterfill: Would my hon. Friend therefore agree that, given the scale and likely time scale of crossrail, that is a matter that the Select Committee should consider seriously?

Mr. Lidington: I am sure that the Select Committee will take the whole question of compensation seriously and will want to listen carefully to the arguments of any petitioners who have been unable to reach an agreement with the promoters.

Another matter which I know has caused concern is the inclusion of clause 18, which seeks to disapply statutory controls over alterations to listed buildings. The reason for that clause is that it is essential that the Bill gives the promoters the power that they need to build crossrail. That could not be achieved if, after Parliament had authorised the project, the promoters then had to go through a completely separate procedure under the planning Acts to demolish or interfere with buildings currently listed, or even buildings that are not listed now but which might be listed in future.

I emphasise, however, that the promoters are aware of the need to minimise the environmental impact of crossrail upon the built environment. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich, with his detailed knowledge of crossrail and his new responsibilities as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage, will be working hard to make sure that crossrail not only goes ahead but goes ahead with a minimal impact upon the valuable built environment of central London.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The hon. Gentleman is doing a very good job at short notice. Has he had an opportunity to study the report of the Joint Committee on Private Bill Procedure? The point on which he is touching—the right of promoters to override the various planning processes—concerned that Committee greatly. Has British Rail been in discussion with English Heritage? Has English Heritage petitioned against the Bill, and, if so, will British Rail on this occasion allow it to put its case, as it has not done on previous occasions?

Mr. Lidington: I have not studied the report to which the hon. Gentleman refers, but he will know better than I do that this is probably the last major private Bill of its kind that will come before the House, and that any future projects would be dealt with under the new procedure that has recently been authorised. I think that it would be wrong, however, to delay the project and risk its future by saying that it should go to the back of the queue and start again under the new procedure.

The promoters have offered to consult both English Heritage and the individual local authorities concerned as soon as the need for works affecting a listed building or building in a conservation area is clear, and before any

building is interferred with. The promoters face a slight difficulty, because it is difficult for them to predict, when they are still talking to petitioners, exactly which buildings will be affected and how.

That is why schedule 6 sets out a long list of buildings affected by clause 18. At first sight, that list seems daunting. However, I assure the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and the House that the promoters currently believe that it will be necessary to interfere with a very small number of listed buildings or buildings in conservation areas. Their current thinking is that perhaps only three listed buildings would need to be demolished for the project to go ahead successfully.

I want to refer briefly to finance. Crossrail is a major infrastructure project. I am sure that the House will be aware of the general constraints on public expenditure at the moment. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will say more about finance later. On behalf of the promoters, I would like to make it clear that they would be very happy to work with private sector partners to get Crossrail built.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I want to raise a familiar theme, which no doubt the Minister will anticipate. Does the hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) understand that, when we are asked to approve legislation either on Second Reading or Third Reading, one of our problems when there is no guarantee about the money for a project, and when days of staff time in this place and thousands of pounds are spent on preparation by the promoters, is that we must remember that the money has not been provided for the previous legislation relating to London railways—the Jubilee line?

Will the hon. Gentleman use his influence to ensure that he will get more support and encouragement for crossrail if the earlier project receives the green light before we make further progress on this project?

Mr. Lidington: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, and I assure him that I will remain the hon. Member for Aylesbury while I speak on behalf of the promoters in relation to crossrail.

I want now to refer briefly to the instruction tabled by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore). I have no doubt that he will seek to catch your eye later, Madam Deputy Speaker. He has strongly felt and legitimate concerns about the project.

I believe that it is already quite in order for petitioners to raise with the Committee the list of subjects contained in the right hon. Gentleman's instruction. Similarly, it would be in order for the Committee to consider them. The promoters believe that the instruction is superfluous, and that the House should be content to leave it to the Committee to decide upon the extent to which it wishes to inquire into the matters listed in the instruction. For those reasons, I ask the House not to accept the instruction.

Crossrail is important for London and for the south-east of England. British Rail and London Underground carry three quarters of all the commuters who travel to central London. That amounts to more than 1 billion passenger journeys a year. It is in the interests of those passengers that the project goes ahead.

However, I believe that the project is also a national issue. If London is to compete effectively with Frankfurt, Paris, Tokyo or New York, it must have a modern, reliable and efficient system of rail transport. That is what international trade and finance and British commuters want and expect. For those reasons, for the London and regional interests and because I believe that the project is in our nation's interests, I commend the Bill and its additional provision to the House.

7.43 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): May I first congratulate the hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) on his presentation of the Bill? I understand that congratulations are also due as the hon. Gentleman's wife gave birth within the last 72 hours. To be handed a Bill and a baby in the same week is beyond the call of duty for any Member of Parliament.

The Labour party has long supported the crossrail principle and will therefore support the Bill. We deplore the delay and uncertainty which have surrounded it so far and the fact that there are still so many unanswered questions. For all our discussions tonight, crossrail is still a paper project. With the Jubilee line, the fast link to the tunnel and the west coast main line, there were repeated Government announcements of support in principle, but no substance to back them up or the leadership to ensure that those projects take place in a reasonable time scale.

In respect of crossrail, we still do not know where the money will come from. We do not know when work will start or what role the private sector will seek or be willing to accept. We do not know what conditions the private sector will insist on. In short, we still do not know if or when the project will happen. That is a strange way to plan the transport needs of our country for the next century. Indeed, it is a very Tory way.

The backdrop to this debate and to any debate about the railways this week must be the announcement of job losses by ABB Transportation in York and Derby. Nine hundred jobs have gone down the drain because of the blight——

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Robert Key): What has all this got to do with it?

Mr. Wilson: The Minister for Roads and Traffic wants to know what this has to do with it. I suppose that he has been brought in to add weight to the Transport team. If he waits a moment, he will discover exactly what it has to do with it. I suppose that it is natural to move someone from running the national lottery to the Tory Transport team.

Let me explain what the job losses have to do with this. Unless the major infrastructure projects go ahead, the blight which the Railway Industry Association has warned against will deepen and continue and many more thousands of jobs will be lost in the railway industry.

The Minister for Roads and Traffic might like to examine the presentation document for the class 341 train for crossrail. If it had not taken years to get the project to this stage, if we had not had to drag the time from the Government for this Second Reading debate and if we were now talking about the project going ahead, the trains would be under construction, the design work would be in progress and we might have a flourishing railway manufacturing industry in this country.

Instead, the Jubilee line, crossrail, the tunnel link and the west coast main line are in no position to go ahead. That is why our railway manufacturing industries are being strangled. I hope that in that brief tutorial I have

[Mr. Wilson]

managed to relate tonight's debate to my comments about the redundancies in York and Derby. Alas, many thousands more will follow if the present policies are pursued.

There cannot be many other pieces of legislation which have stood on the toes of so many of the good and the great. I hope that that will not be another reason for undue influence being exerted behind the scenes in respect of Government policy. The route which crossrail is designed to follow seems to pass the doors of just about every influential interest group in the country and, as everyone knows, many of them do not like it.

I understand that the estate agents are particularly opposed to the project. Magnanimously, they have made a small cottage industry out of advising others who are opposed to the project to their own considerable advantage. I suppose that that is a case of hedging their bets.

I had never expected to be lobbied by the Mayfair residents association. I regard it as a considerable diminution of my status that it should have seen fit to approach me. Of course, the many legitimate concerns must be addressed by the promoters, as the hon. Member for Aylesbury recognised. I stress that the legitimate concerns of ordinary citizens who live on housing estates and in the less fashionable parts of London and the rest of the crossrail route must be treated as seriously as the concerns of those who exercise influence in high places and who, in this matter, will certainly seek to continue to exercise that influence.

As the hon. Member for Aylesbury said, we will certainly hear from my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and from other Opposition Members who have legitimate concerns about the project and how it will affect their constituents. I hope that there will be respect for those doubts and concerns on all sides of the House. It is totally incumbent on the sponsors of the Bill to go to maximum lengths to meet those doubts and concerns.

In particular, they should respect the principle that, when there is inconvenience to areas along the route, benefits should also be brought to those areas in terms of employment and improvement of communications. It would be unjust if areas along the route suffered massive disruption for five years or so until the project is completed and then at the end of the day had little or nothing to show for it. I hope that the principle of equity will be respected.

We deplore the lack of strategic planning for London and an overall vision for transport and communications in the Greater London area and beyond. We recognise that the scheme is to a large extent a child of the Greater London council and the era in which people were talking about the proper planning of transport in London.

Mr. Tony Banks: We put it forward.

Mr. Wilson: The current scheme was borne out of a 60 per cent. increase in passenger traffic on London Underground between 1982 and 1989. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) rightly says that the GLC put it forward. As a child of the GLC, he will undoubtedly elaborate on that theme later in the debate.

In January 1989, the central London rail study concluded that upgrading to the existing network would be effective in cutting overcrowding but that new lines were needed urgently if the long-term problems were to be solved. Of all the new lines proposed, crossrail would be the most effective in tackling the key problems of congestion on the central line and Network SouthEast services into Liverpool Street. In September 1990, the current crossrail route was safeguarded and detailed consultation began. It is a source of regret to Labour Members that it has taken almost three years to reach this Second Reading debate.

I examined as much of the proposed route as I could to familiarise myself with some of the details of the issues involved. I have talked to representatives of crossrail who have a commitment to making the necessary arrangements and safeguards to minimise the disturbance. Let no one kid themselves. We cannot have a project of this scale anywhere in the country without substantial disruption. Certainly, we cannot have a project of this scale in the centre of London without substantial disruption and that is a fact of life with which people will have to live. I recognise that many people throughout the country have had major upheaval because of infrastructural developments without a fraction of the consultation or the willingness to answer concerns and build in safeguards that has been shown by the sponsors of this Bill.

It is essential that buildings and other structures above ground level are protected and steps must be taken to do that. When I toured the area, I was struck not so much by the buildings that must be safeguarded as by the extent of architectural vandalism that has taken place over the past 20 years or so in many of the sensitive areas which we are now talking about safeguarding. I refer to some of the great squares through which the route will pass. Sadly, the damage was done in the 1960s and 1970s with grotesque buildings that should never have been permitted in the first place. I hope that, at least on some parts of the route, the effect of crossrail and the sensitivity that the developers must show will bring architectural improvement to those places, rather than further decline.

Certainly, there will be disruption and the job of the sponsors and those who will preside over them must be to limit that disruption and the impact on the environment, the people who live there, those who work there and those who have businesses there. All that must be extremely carefully guarded against. I hope that the sponsors will accept the principle that, simply because there is an open space, it should not be used as a building site in connection with this project. There are legitimate worries about that on many parts of the route.

While it is easy to say that a delicate garden in the middle of a west end square will be safeguarded, I hope that the same respect will be paid to public parks and open spaces throughout the length of the route. My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) asked me to make that point, which he strongly endorses and advocates.

The benefits of crossrail will be to relieve overcrowding on the Central line, reduce journey times across the south-east, create 19 interchanges with the existing network, relieve overcrowding at stations by moving 30,000 passengers a day to change at Liverpool Street and provide better-quality trains. To return to my original point, there is a desperate need for better-quality trains to maintain a railway manufacturing industry. The project

will also mean diverting traffic away from the roads, which is important. There is a strong environmental aspect to the legislation, which is one reason why the Labour party supports it.

To comment on the work sites that will be used during construction, especially in anticipation of some of the comments which my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney will make, one of the most interesting urban areas that I have examined in a long time is the area around Allen Gardens in his constituency. A wide variety of activities take place in that area. It is a heavily populated area with a mixed community. It has a city farm and a school and it is a market area. It is extremely interesting. I must enter the plea and, indeed, the expectation that, when the work is finished—if it goes ahead there—that area will be not only restored but improved and that the views of local residents will be taken fully into account from the start to the finish of the process.

Since the Crossrail Bill was deposited in 1991, the plans for the project have been refined. I have been told that only one listed building will need to be demolished completely and a further five listed structures will need to be partially demolished. It would be good if that total could be reduced further, but that is a matter for ongoing consideration.

We support crossrail, together with other major infrastructural projects on environmental and communication grounds and, perhaps above all, because we understand that we will not get out of this ghastly recession without such kick starts to the economy. Such projects play a key part in any Keynesian approach to economics. We will not get recovery unless we have major projects. Jobs and the multiplying effect in the economy come most effectively through projects of this nature.

There are various estimates of the number of jobs that will be created. It has been said that 60,000 jobs will be associated with the crossrail project. I have no first-hand knowledge of whether that estimate is on the high or low side, but, certainly, the project will be a substantial source of both direct or indirect employment.

For all those reasons, we support the Bill. In doing so, we tell the Government that this should not be the end of the process. It should not be the start of another long hiatus in which nothing much happens. The Bill will go to a Committee. I hope that it will not be bogged down for too long, although all objections and representations must be taken seriously and addressed. We want the project to go ahead on the basis that all the representations and concerns have been properly addressed.

That means that at some point the Government will have to get behind it. They will have to say where the money is coming from and underwrite funding, if necessary. They will have to give leadership—they cannot sit back, as they have done for years on other major infrastructural projects, and make woolly noises about the private sector getting involved. Nothing happens and months and years pass.

If the Government are serious about the project, they must say where the money will come from, give the necessary leadership and ensure that crossrail happens. They must do so sooner rather than later. If they prevaricate and if the process continues indefinitely, the people of London and the whole area served by crossrail will feel betrayed and let down by the Government yet again. Everyone who believes that the capital should have a co-ordinated, modern transport policy will recognise again that, while the Tories talk big, they act very small indeed.

7.59 pm

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): I welcome this opportunity to confirm the Government's support for the Bill. I wish to add my own words of appreciation of the work which was put into the Bill by my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Mr. Sproat), whose ministerial duties have obviously taken him elsewhere. As my colleagues will appreciate, it was the most exquisite case of the biter bit or the poacher turned gamekeeper when my hon. Friend translated himself from the putative sponsor of the Crossrail Bill into the Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage with responsibility for protecting listed buildings.

Mr. Dicks: British Rail is part of our heritage.

Mr. Norris: As my hon. Friend says, there is no doubt an interest there too. My hon. Friend the Member for Harwich did a great deal of work in connection with the Crossrail Bill. I am sure that the whole House agrees that it is right to put on record a word of thanks to my hon. Friend for the valuable work that he did in bringing the scheme forward.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) has done a magnificent job in taking on the Bill at extraordinary short notice. To add to the comments made by the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson), I gather that Mrs. Lidington—as it is proper for me to refer to her in the House—was so shocked at the news that my hon. Friend had taken on the job that she produced his son and heir three weeks early.

Mr. Tony Banks: That is more than we can say for crossrail.

Mr. Norris: Indeed, there was certainly no case of premature delivery there. The hon. Gentleman is right. But with his customary good humour, I am sure that he wants to wish Mrs. Lidington a happy time now with her new child. I am sure that the child will be a speed reader by the age of three if he is the scion of my hon. Friend. He will undoubtedly read at an early age of his formal introduction to the House at such an early point in his career. It is probably a parliamentary first.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury gave an excellent account of the Bill's scope and purpose so the reason for the Government's support is clear. He described what crossrail was and the benefits that it would bring to London, the south-east of England and the country as a whole. He spoke about the reduced passenger congestion that crossrail would bring, the faster and easier rail journeys that it would enable passengers to make into central London, and the better designed stations and trains that it would bring to London. Many of those benefits have been stressed in recent months by a wide range of interests.

We have received representations about the benefits of crossrail from many right hon. and hon. Members, local authorities, private companies, retailers' organisations, professional organisations, environmental groups and many others. I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House agree about the importance of the benefits that crossrail will bring.

[Mr. Norris]

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North, for the fact that, in the midst of his customary expletives about the Government's transport policy in general, a few words of general support for the Bill leaked out. I know that it was a painful process for the hon. Gentleman. I congratulate him on having stuck with it and saying at the end that he would support the Bill. It was decent of him.

I recognise how painful it must be for him to find himself associated with the Mayfair residents committee. But it is an experience that will come to him, as it comes to us all. It is not painful and he will get over it fairly quickly.

Mr. Wilson: As a matter of fact, I was thinking of applying for honorary membership. I said at the start that we supported the Bill. I said that we had supported it for a long time. I wonder who has supported it for the longer time. I suspect that it is Opposition Members and particularly my distinguished hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks).

Mr. Norris: I would not dream of getting into a debate with the hon. Gentleman about whose is longer than whose. Suffice it to say that I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for confirming beyond reasonable doubt that he is a putative Mayfair resident and that he supports the Bill.

The Government attach importance to the benefits of crossrail. I stress the reduction in congestion because it is at the heart of our policy for transport in London. We are determined to maintain London's competitiveness with other major European cities such as Paris and Frankfurt. Reducing congestion is a key element in achieving that.

As the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North and my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury said, crossrail will bring relief from congestion on many critical parts of London's road and public transport networks. It will reduce congestion on the Central line, as we agree. Hon. Members will also accept that it will ease Liverpool Street station. It will reduce congestion on the Great Eastern commuter services from the east and on the Metropolitan line from the west.

The pressure of congestion on those lines is serious now. We know that as the country pulls out of recession, increased employment levels will quickly cause that pressure and congestion to grow. We must obviously ensure that London is fully equipped to deal with the problem before it becomes critical.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The Minister is right to say that crossrail will ease the Central line, because to some extent it will be a fast addition to the Central line. But can he explain how it will ease congestion east of Bethnal Green on the Great Eastern? There will be no additional tracks as far as I am aware, other than Union rail.

To enable me to make perhaps a less critical speech than I otherwise might make, if I catch the eye of the Chair, will the Minister tell us, in view of the Government's legislation, who will own the tunnels and stations of crossrail? Who will run the tunnels and stations, as distinct from running the trains?

Mr. Norris: On the first point, the hon. Gentleman has an extensive knowledge of the matter and he will appreciate that the crossrail route will not run parallel to the Great Eastern. However, it will offer to a raft of people in that part of west Essex in particular an alternative means of accessing the west end of London. That will thereby relieve congestion on the Great Eastern.

The hon. Gentleman is also right to say that the major reduction of congestion will occur on the Central line. That is an important point. I often hear commentators divide expenditure on London transport between what is known as core expenditure and what is known as mega-project expenditure, as if the two were different. I frequently stress the point, which I know is appreciated by many hon. Members, that the two are integral.

We are in the process of spending £800 million on the Central line. I know that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West is aware of the scale of that investment. Many of his constituents will benefit from it. But the congestion on the Central line will be reduced by only about 15 per cent. as a result of that upgrading. The major benefit in congestion reduction will come with the crossrail project.

I shall say a few words about finance in a moment. If the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) will wait until then, I will answer his second point.

It is of course true that the employment levels on which the plans for crossrail were originally based—the assumptions in the central London rail study—are now some five years old. Of course, they look optimistic now because they were made before the depth of the recession became apparent. Traffic levels have certainly fallen since the assumptions were made. It may well take longer to achieve the forecast traffic levels, but we are confident that, with economic recovery, those levels will be achieved, albeit later than the central London rail study supposed.

I underline that crossrail is not a five-year or 10-year project. As with all the great underground rail projects in London, it is a project for the next 50 or 100 years.

Apart from the relief of congestion and the other benefits mentioned by my hon. Friend, crossrail also has an important role to play in the strategic development of London and the south-east. By providing a new fast link along London's east-west corridor, the project runs very much with the grain of future development in London. To the west, as we all know, the pressures of development have always been strong; to the east, there is the huge potential of the east Thames corridor, which the Government have recognised we should tap. One of the most important initiatives in that area is the high-speed line to the channel, the channel tunnel rail link.

Crossrail's benefits are closely linked with those of the CTRL. As the House knows, the Government's preferred route for consultation for the CTRL runs via Stratford into St. Pancras. The Kings Cross-St. Pancras underground station is already one of London Underground's most crowded stations. It could not readily cope with more than six commuter trains an hour coming off the CTRL. Part of the case for crossrail is that it would allow CTRL commuters from Kent to go westwards to the City and the west end, either through a direct link from the CTRL to crossrail or, if a stop is provided on the CTRL at Stratford, by changing onto crossrail trains there.

Meanwhile, the promoters have further developed the design of the project. My hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury referred to the additional provision which was deposited by the promoters in January. My officials and I

looked carefully at it. We noted that it contained several important new measures, including the provision for a possible new station at Northwood—which I am glad so delighted our hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson)—powers to change the design of certain ticket halls, powers to improve the location of certain ventilation shafts and so on. I am satisfied that those extra measures that the additional provision adds to the Bill are necessary to enable the crossrail project to develop satisfactorily.

Mr. Dicks: Will my hon. Friend comment on taking crossrail into Heathrow? He has commented on many aspects of the proposals. Would he like to say a word or two about that?

Mr. Norris: I will indeed say a word or two about that. If it is possible in future to connect crossrail to the Heathrow express project which the British Airports Authority is taking forward with British Rail, that will provide a superb link from Heathrow into Paddington and thence into the City. For the first time it will be possible for people to get directly from a terminal at the country's major airport, which employs a great many people in my hon. Friend's constituency, to their office in the City of London via Liverpool Street station within a short period. That is one of the most exciting prospects that the crossrail project offers us.

Given that my hon. Friend's future is so closely entwined with that of Heathrow airport—he has never made any secret of that and he has been a campaigner for his constituents for many years—he should not underestimate the huge benefit to the viability of Heathrow that crossrail brings.

The irony is that at present there is a good train service from Gatwick to Victoria and a better train service from Stansted to Liverpool Street, but there is no rail service to Heathrow other than the Piccadily line. Any hon. Member who has had the pleasure of that service will know——

Mr. Tony Banks: It is appalling.

Mr. Norris: —as the hon. Gentleman says, that it is appalling. London Transport will accept that the hon. Gentleman means that it takes over an hour, it stops, there is nowhere to put luggage and it is an extremely inconvenient journey. The great advantage of linking the Heathrow express to crossrail would be to overcome that and to give the world's No.1 international airport the link into Europe's business centre that we as a nation must have.

Mr. Dicks: A point made in the discussion about the Heathrow express was exactly the point that my hon. Friend makes in relation to crossrail. It was said that a train running from Paddington to Heathrow every 15 minutes would be sufficient. Now it is argued that there is a little gap of 14 minutes between those trains and crossrail would fill it. In effect that means that every day there will be trains whipping past my constituents' homes continually. All I am saying is that my hon. Friend's argument for crossrail is the same as that made by the promoters of the Heathrow express.

Mr. Norris: No doubt it was, but for every person who is on a train there may be one fewer car emitting all sorts of pollution on its way through London to Heathrow airport and clogging up the M4. The benefits are enormous. I hope that on balance my hon. Friend will consider the substantial benefits for those who live around Heathrow as a result of the reduction in the number for cars that will need to access the airport. Anything that enhances the viability of a major centre, such as Heathrow, to the degree that this project does is surely to be welcomed.

I must stress that crossrail is not the Heathrow express. My hon. Friend is right to link them. He suggests that somehow that is to be avoided and should be regarded with suspicion. I say that it is an opportunity of which we should enthusiastically take advantage.

We have already done a considerable amount of work on the way in which the project is to be taken forward. The House will recall that in announcing our public expenditure plans last November my right hon. Friend the then Chancellor of the Exchequer explained that we had been examining ways of increasing the scope for private financing of capital projects. He told the House of his decision to liberalise the rules for such financing. He also announced our intention actively to encourage joint ventures with the private sector where they involve a real transfer of risk to the private sector. He said that we would be prepared to consider such an approach for crossrail. That is precisely what we have been doing.

My right hon. Friend told the House in his Budget speech in March of the enthusiastic response that we had received to the private finance initiative. He said that we had concluded that it would be preferable to take crossrail forward as a joint venture with the private sector. We therefore set about re-examining the present proposals with a view to maximising the participation and financial involvement of the private sector and to securing the best value for money for the taxpayer.

Let us be clear what the initiative is about. Too often in the past the Government have treated proposed projects as being either wholly private or wholly public sector projects. We believe that there are considerable benefits to be gained, beyond the question of sharing costs and risks, from allowing private sector skills to become involved in the development of projects such as crossrail.

To answer a point made by the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North, it is entirely right that the Government should be prepared to pay for social and other wider non-user benefits of a line such as crossrail. Nevertheless, we want to bring the entrepreneurial skills of the private sector to bear whenever we can: where it can tailor services to the market, increase revenue and exercise better control of our costs—in short, where it can invest its money at its risk and reap its reward. That process can also free scarce public funds to meet other important needs.

Before the hon. Gentleman comes back on that, let me make two points. First, that decision must be right, given that any Government of whatever complexion is faced with the finity of public expenditure and the fact that there will always be projects that although desirable are not affordable. That would be the case even if the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friends were on the Government Front Bench, no doubt with him, or if the hon. Gentleman were where he is, and I hope that he stays there for a lot longer.

In that context it is important to look at the ways in which additional funding can be unlocked. That is what the private sector participation initiative does. I understand the point made by the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North about the regenerative potential of such schemes, and no doubt he is right. However, I see

[Mr. Norris]

nothing in the writings of John Maynard Keynes that justifies a poorly valued project, which has been poorly researched and offers poor value for taxpayers money being advanced as a public project merely because it would create jobs.

That is not the test that must be applied. The most important test is that the project represents genuine value for money and allows us to add to that which can be provided in the private sector either by public or private interest.

Mr. Shore: Can the Minister be a little bit more specific? He expresses his enthusiasm for private participation in the project, but what are the orders of magnitude of which he is thinking, accepting that the total cost will be around £2,000 million? What proportion of that does he expect the private sector to contribute? He has the report of the consultants' examination of the prospects, and surely it would help the House if it were made public. We could then judge the project for ourselves rather than take it entirely on the Minister's word.

Mr. Norris: We appointed consultants to look at the project to see whether it was a genuine runner as a joint venture and how it might be made most attractive. They reported to us last month that it would indeed be an attractive joint venture. We asked the promoters to proceed to the Second Reading on that basis. It would have been wrong for us to do so had we not had that reassurance.

I am sure that the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) appreciates that I cannot anticipate what the final division of costs or investment might be as between the public purse and the private sector. That would quite properly be a matter for negotiation. The Government are not contemplating, however, simply a project that is substantially in the public sector to which the private sector might merely offer a small contribution. We are looking for the private sector to be fundamentally involved in taking the project forward. That would imply fairly sizeable funds being injected by the private sector.

What really underpins the argument, however, as I am sure the right hon. Gentleman knows, is that the project involves the private sector taking on a measure of the risk. It will be involved in identifying an income stream and the way in which that can be rewarded. Its own ability to control costs will be crucial because that will add value for those who will ultimately be the users of the scheme.

Sir Trevor Skeet: This extremely good scheme must be fostered because a private venture is an excellent idea. Assuming that it will be run on the basis of a 50:50 arrangement, and bearing in mind that we have a public sector borrowing requirement for next year of £50 billion, will the Government give a guarantee that they will come up with the money?

Mr. Norris: I hesitate to say to my hon. Friend that he is too long in the tooth because that might not be considered flattering, but he is experienced enough to know that I am not here to give guarantees for expenditure that will occur way beyond the public expenditure survey. My hon. Friend is absolutely right, however, that the project is a classic private sector one.

To assist the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney, I should say that the public sector benefit is assessable in terms of what I described loosely as the non-user benefits. That refers to reduction in congestion, the greater facility for business that is provided by the scheme and so on. That is a tried technique of assessment of which, I believe, the right hon. Gentleman had some direct experience when he held ministerial office.

If the project is taken forward as, essentially, a private sector one, but is underpinned by the concept of the public sector contribution reflecting those non-user benefits, it is a perfectly sensible marriage. I do not believe that it would be in the taxpayer's interest to reveal the full details of the reports which the crossrail team received and for which the Government called. I believe that the case is a perfectly sustainable one. It is not a question of wanting to keep secret the contents of the report because a great deal of it will necessarily be made public as the recommendations are brought into play. They underpin the fundamental decision that this is a good project, which is worth supporting.

Mr. Spearing: I appreciate that the Minister shares our fundamental desire to seek proper transport in London. He will recall that, four years ago, I sent a memorandum to the Department advocating support for the scheme as against others. Surely the Government are in danger, however, of doing what they have done before by taking their own views in abeyance of practicalities. The railway will be extremely expensive to build because it will need many escalators and tunnels, a lot of ventilation and a great deal of remedial work.

How will the Minister get the revenue from the capital involved to pay a sufficient return to any private capital that he may raise, even if the taxpayer provides support that does not expect a return? Is he not aware that the tube never paid in its early days?

Mr. Norris: Yes, of course I am aware of that. I do not want to get drawn into the detail, however, because the House will be bored to tears and because I am not sure that it would assist.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): It would be fascinating.

Mr. Norris: I am happy to give the hon. Gentleman a private tutorial on the subject at a place of his choosing.

The hon. Member for Newham, South should understand that the reality is straightforward. Were the scheme capable of being entirely financed at profitable levels by revenue raised from passengers there would be no need for the taxpayer to contribute. The scheme could then no doubt proceed. As the hon. Gentleman rightly said, however, when one considers the concept of tunnelling in central London, which is an extremely expensive business, the scheme, of necessity, is unlikely to be profitable in itself. That is precisely where the taxpayers' interest in the social and other non-user benefits, which are conveyed by the scheme, come into play.

The Government have therefore made it clear that they are prepared to consider investment in the scheme to reflect those benefits. That is not only perfectly good common sense, but a prudent way in which to undertake projects of this size. The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North is apparently not prepared to accept that that means that the amount that would otherwise be invested in the

scheme can now be available for investment elsewhere. I apologise to hon. Members for my behaviour just now, but the idea that there are no flies on me at last has some veracity.

Mr. Wilson: I thought that we were about to see the Government swot.

We know that the Minister paints with a broad brush, but could he focus a little, perhaps to the nearest half a billion pounds, on how much he expects from the private sector? I should have thought that he could give us a little help on that. Can he give us any idea of what he expects the private sector to do? Will it have an investment, operational or partnership role? Will the project be some sort of franchise enterprise? I am sure that the private sector would like to know what the Government have in mind for them, or is it all as vague as the fly that buzzes around?

Mr. Norris: I am sorry to disappoint the hon. Gentleman on several counts. I do not believe that it would make any sense to negotiate in advance, in a vacuum. The precise form that any such agreement might take has yet to be determined and will no doubt largely depend on what developers tell us they believe is practicable. That is an important part of the process. There will be areas of interest where those in the private sector will say that we have got it wrong and that we will need to alter them if we want the proposals to succeed.

Mr. Tony Banks: What have they said so far?

Mr. Norris: It is clear from what they have already said that they would like appropriate legislation in place so that the powers to deliver the project exist before they invest and participate in it. Beyond that, they have made it clear that they are prepared to listen, as we are. I believe that the dialogue that we have developed with them is extremely constructive. It is not a broad brush issue—there is a great difference between expressing principles simply, which I hope we are capable of doing, and glossing over important detail, which we are not attempting to do.

Mr. Butterfill: When the consultants considered the viability of the project, in what terms did they consider the compensation code? The 1991 code did not envisage negative equity for the houses that may be purchased. There are people who can afford to maintain the mortgage payments on their houses, but if those houses where compulsorily acquired, the occupiers would be left with a debt and nowhere to live. Will that problem be addressed during the Bill's consideration?

Mr. Norris: I shall say a word on that subject in a few minutes, if my hon. Friend will bear with me.

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) should declare his interest.

Mr. Butterfill: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. From a sedentary position, the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) asked me to declare my interest. I have no financial interest in the matter whatsoever.

Ms Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): Hopefully, my constituents will be spared the blight that threatens Allen Gardens in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) which is slightly further to the west, and will be spared the problems of compulsory purchase and negative equity mentioned by the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill).

Why does the Minister believe that the private sector will be forthcoming with the finances for the project any more than it has been for the Jubilee line or the extension of the docklands light railway? What does the private sector have to gain? Surely the Minister must accept that such major changes constitute a public service and must be undertaken by the Government.

Mr. Norris: There is a considerable qualitative difference between the examples given by the hon. Lady and the crossrail project. She will know that the Government's contribution to the Jubilee line is committed, provided that the private sector contribution is forthcoming. The hon. Lady has a strong constituency interest in the area, and I think that she knows that the private sector is picking up the pieces from the Olympia and York administration and has been prepared to negotiate on similar terms to provide the necessary finance.

When that is forthcoming, the line will commence. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has always made that clear. I regard that as a straightforward developer-contribution project, which is not a precedent for what we are now discussing. We are talking about taking forward a project as a joint venture, which is fundamentally different.

Mr. Snape: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Norris: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, but I hope that he will then allow me to proceed. I appreciate that the issue is important, but I am sure that the House would wish me to make progress.

Mr. Snape: I apologise to the Minister for not being able to wait for his private tutorial, but he cannot be allowed to wriggle off the financial hook so easily. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms Gordon) said, the private sector has been less than forthcoming in contributions to the Jubilee line and has contributed only a small proportion of that development's total cost. The House deserves better from the Minister. We should know, at least vaguely—vagueness appears to be at the core of the Minister's speech—what proportion of the total bill for this massive but much needed project the Government envisage the private sector paying.

Mr. Norris: The hon. Gentleman should get his facts right. The private sector contribution to the Jubilee line extension is almost £400 million—a not insignificant amount of developer contribution. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well—implicit in what he has said is the understanding—that crossrail is a different sort of project. It has been taken forward as a private sector project on terms yet to be established. It would not be in anyone's interest to negotiate now in a vacuum on a project whose shape we need to refine with those who are seriously interested in advancing it.

There is no shortage of serious interest in such projects. The easiest thing that one can do in banking is take deposits, but that does not make a profit. One only makes a profit when one invests. Major bankers all over the world are interested in creative ways of investing in major infrastructure opportunities.

[Mr. Norris]

Private sector participation may lead to some changes in the scope or timing of some of the works proposed. I fully expect that we shall be able to say more about that by the time that the bulk of the Committee work is done, but for the present, the proper assumption for petitioners to make is that the promoters will continue to require the powers for which the Bill makes provision.

I should make it absolutely clear that our adoption of the joint venture approach in no way undermines the agreements that the promoters may have reached with, or the undertaking that they may yet give to, people affected by crossrail. I unequivocally state that if those undertakings are inherited by a private sector interest through a joint venture, they will be honoured.

Once the Committee stage gets under way, there will be a wide range of issues for consideration—I shall now mention just two. The first is the subject of compensation, which was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill). I know that some people regard the provisions of the current code as inadequate to meet the specific circumstances that arise as a result of crossrail's plans. The Secretary of State for the Environment addressed that issue.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury said, earlier this year the Secretary of State looked at some of the issues raised by those who regard the code's provisions as inadequate. However, it is not long since the Government reviewed the compensation code prior to the Planning and Compensation Act 1991. Therefore, the general view of my right hon. Friend is that the provisions strike a fair balance between the interests of landowners and the community as a whole, and he sees no immediate case for any further amendment.

Secondly, there is the issue of the way in which listed buildings are treated in the Bill. Clause 18 disapplies the normal statutory controls over the demolition and alteration of listed buildings and buildings in conservation areas. We decided that it would be appropriate for the promoters to include such a clause in the Bill when we gave them consent to deposit the Bill in Parliament in November 1991. That was an important decision and I shall remind the House of the background to it.

There has quite properly been much cross-party concern in recent years about the possible use of private Bills as a means of side-stepping conservation legislation. We accept that promoters should not as a matter of course be able to circumvent normal statutory planning consent procedures. But the statutory planning procedures should not be able to thwart Parliament's will. Important projects like crossrail should not be delayed and put at risk. Ministers responsible for such matters in the Department of the Environment and the Department of Trasnport reached agreement two years ago on the basis on which the Government would, in future, give consent to the deposit of private Bills including such clauses. It was agreed that such clauses would be allowed only in exceptional cases. The sort of scheme for which it would be appropriate to use such a clause would be a scheme of strategic importance promoted in pursuit of Government policy objectives.

Mr. Wilson: While we are on the subject of planning controls and straying outwith normal planning procedures, does the Minister agree that the administration of the royal parks should not regard itself as being outwith planning procedures? The project's designers want to erect a ventilation shaft in Hyde park in a discreet way which I do not think would harm the landscape, but they should not act in a spirit that goes above and beyond planning controls. It may seem as improbable as me becoming a member of the Mayfair residents association, but on this occasion I am on the side of Westminster council.

Mr. Norris: The hon. Gentleman should be used to having strange bedfellows on the project. He is right: the issue is important. In my discussions with the crossrail team, it has made it clear that it intends, where possible, to apply the most stringent standards to its negotiations with those interested either in listed buildings or buildings in conservation areas. I know it has been in considerable negotiation with the authorities responsible for the royal parks. Indeed, the Under-Secretary of State who was recently at the Department for National Heritage can confirm that that was the case.

Mr. Wilson: Perhaps we can take advantage of the presence of the Under-Secretary and the juxtaposition of responsibilities to which the Minister referred. I was asking whether the royal parks would accede to the views of the local authority and the crossrail project. From what the Minister says, I gather that the Government will say, "Thank you very much, but no, you are not doing it, so you will have to put it somewhere else," which will cause more problems and provide further objections from local residents.

Mr. Norris: The matter is still under discussion between the various parties involved, so I cannot tell the hon. Gentleman the conclusion. I underline that the issue is taken very seriously. That is true of the whole way in which the team intends to take forward consideration of buildings that are likely to be affected by the project.

That is the note on which I wish to end because it is for the Committee to take a view on the many detailed objections that have been the subject of petitions against the Bill. It is not for the Government, or for the House on Second Reading, to take a view on all those detailed points. My hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury has already described what works will be involved if Parliament confers the powers. Those, and the effects on petitioners, will be closely examined during the Committee stage of the Bill.

I assure the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney that hon. Members will examine in Committee the types of issue mentioned by him in his special instructions. So I do not believe that that instruction is necessary, nor that standing in the name of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), which covers very similar issues. Where they are relevant—as the hon. Gentleman will know from his long experience—the Committee will wish to consider them.

We in Government are determined to secure the future of London as a world-class city, for Londoners and for the international community. That means pressing forward quickly with crossrail as a joint venture between the public and private sectors. The project will bring enormous benefits, on many of which I and other hon. Members have dwelt at length. In view of those benefits, the Government support the Bill, which I commend to the House.

8.41 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): I have standing in my name a motion

"That the Bill be read a second time upon this day six months"

and an instruction, on which I have taken note of what was said by the hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) and by the Minister. I understood them both to say that my instruction was not necessary because, in the words of the hon. Member for Aylesbury, "they can take account" and because, in the stronger words of the Minister, "they will take account."

In view of those strong indications, I can safely leave my instruction, as it were, although I emphasise that it is important that the wider considerations which were mentioned in the instruction, and which relate to events since the crossrail project was originally launched, are seriously examined in the interests of all in London who wish to see the best possible expenditure of public and private money on the improvement of public rail travel in the London area.

I add my congratulations to the hon. Member for Aylesbury, who has served the House well. It is remarkable that he should have picked up the Bill, as it were, and presented it so quickly, and to have done so against the background of the great personal events about which we were pleased to hear.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) kindly referred to my area, which is directly affected by the Bill, or at least by the line of the route, of which we are now aware. He spoke sympathetically about areas to which massive disruption is likely to be caused. I have no doubt that my area will suffer massive disruption; accordingly, I shall make a constituency plea before moving to some wider considerations of the whole issue.

It is an unhappy fact that the double large-bore tunnels will go from Paddington under the ground to Tower Hamlets, where they will come out in the Spitalfields area, which happens to be, on all the indices that exist, the most deprived area of London. The community there will be seriously affected by the development. It is an area of 9,000 people, formed of about 2,500 households, with a third of the population—the relevance of this will become evident—being under the age of 15. It is the largest concentration of Bangladeshi people in England.

That community has only one green open space available for general community purposes. That is called Allen gardens. It is precisely there that the tunnel will burst forth to the surface, heading for the viaduct. The effects of that will be considerable. Because it will be used as a work site, it will be out of action for almost the whole period of tunnel construction, which will be four to five years. Three substantial primary schools are located very close to Allen gardens and a large number of houses exist well within 100 m of where the tunnel will come out.

Anyone who has been near a large construction site will appreciate the great problems that face a community that is subjected to all the environmental disturbance—noise, dust and general congestion—that occurs in such circumstances. I hope that some compensation and mitigating measures will be available and that all possible means will be examined to ease matters. I am not hopeful that much can or will be done, so I am in favour of looking again at the precise route of crossrail.

I believe that there are alternatives. Indeed, some hon. Members have been supporting alternative routes in submissions that I have seen, and I hope that we shall hear more of that tonight. If the route cannot be altered or diverted in a way that will prevent the environmental outrage to which I have referred, I hope that tunnelling right through Tower Hamlets will be considered as an alternative.

Not only will the tunnel emerge in the Spitalfields area, but Allen gardens happens to be the very place chosen for a city challenge project. It is in its second year of city challenge. In other words, vast disruption will take place right in the middle of an area that is supposed, as part of the city challenge project, to be upgraded generally. Instead, it now faces great environmental deterioration. I hope that serious thought will be given to finding alternative solutions and that Allen gardens will not be used for this purpose.

I believe that we ought to say a little more about the origins of the crossrail project and look a little more carefully at the changes that have occurred since it was given the go-ahead. The Minister referred to the report in early 1989 by the then Secretary of State for Transport, from which I should like to quote:

"London's economy has been growing strongly in recent years. This growth is expected to continue. More and more people are seeking to come to work in the tightly packed central area. Parts of inner London, most notably Docklands, are being transformed . . . All this is putting severe strains on London's transport system, which is suffering from heavy congestion at peak times on both road and rail."

It was against that background that the two proposals were advanced: for a major upgrading of the rail network and for two major new developments—either crossrail, or the Hackney-Chelsea line, or both.

It is clear that the report assumes that employment would grow dramatically—hardly surprising, given that the study was carried out in 1988 at the peak of the economic boom. The projection was for 100,000 more jobs in central London by the turn of the century; a higher projection added another 150,000. Three years on, we know that these are not realistic figures. Far from a growth of 150,000 passenger movements, there has been a decline of about the same number. I cannot believe that that has not had a serious effect on the results based on the earlier models.

On 29 March, I asked the Minister a question about that matter. The Minister, saying that he had already answered his hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), stated that he had provided figures from a reassessment carried out in 1991. That is now somewhat out of date; the real damage to London has been done in the past two years. The Minister went on to say:

"A further reappraisal is in hand, and this will take into account the re-examination announced in the Budget on 16 March 1993."—[*Official Report*, 29 March 1993; Vol. 222, c. *1*.]

I am not aware that the further reappraisal has been concluded or that, if concluded, it has been made public. It certainly should be. I cannot believe that the figures from a 1993 assessment are anything like as favourable as they were in 1988 when the original assessment was made. There has been an important change, so I hope that the Minister will inform the Committee of the latest assessment figures.

London is changing, and the more dismal job prospects are not the only factor to be taken into account. It is rather dangerous to assume that, in the next 10 or 15 years, we

[Mr. Peter Shore]

will resume the growth levels of 1988 in central London. A movement away from central London is taking place, helped a great deal by new communications systems. People do not have to be brought together in vast buildings in the centre of London; they can be more easily dispersed. That trend will continue. Even if there is a revival in the London economy, there are vast empty office spaces in docklands which can and should be used.

Since the central London rail study reported, there have been other rail developments, including the Jubilee line extension to Stratford, the channel tunnel rail link via Stratford through the east end of London, ending, we think, at St. Pancras, and the upgrading of the Central line. Oddly, no one in the Government, British Rail or London Underground appears to have considered the impact of those developments on the case for crossrail, nor whether, and if so to what extent, parts of those schemes can be integrated with each other. I am thinking particularly of the likely prospect of a further tunnel being built from Stratford, going through Tower Hamlets and heading down towards St. Pancras terminal.

If that fairly large project has to be built, it would be sensible to determine whether crossrail can be linked with it. That may seem child's play; one would hope that people with computers would seriously study the implications of one such development for others——

Mr. Norris: The right hon. Gentleman's proposition was suggested by Tower Hamlets borough council. He is right to think that there is some superficial appeal in the idea of an alternative route such as the one that he proposes. I asked the promoters and BR to look carefully at it, because I have a great deal of sympathy with much of what the right hon. Gentleman has said. They, however, advised me and the crossrail team in unequivocal terms that the alternative does not meet some of the central decongestion criteria that the project is designed to deliver. I will not elaborate now; suffice it to say that the idea has been examined and, unfortunately, had to be rejected.

Mr. Shore: I thank the Minister for that helpful reply. I am sure that such connected studies should be a permanent feature of transport planning in central and Greater London.

Another recent change since 1988 has been the cut in London Underground's core budget, announced in the 1992 autumn statement. That cut amounted to 30 per cent. Instead of investment of about £860 million in the financial year 1993-94, the autumn statement showed a huge cut, to £570 million. It will continue in the following years.

Given the impact that those cuts in the core budget will have, we should think rather carefully before embarking on more major capital expenditure. The cuts will have a serious effect on London. They will result in delay to the upgrading of the Northern line, so that completion cannot be achieved until at least 2004, and deferral of essential track replacement programmes.

Implementation of the east London line extension will be deferred by two years and no station refurbishment will start in 1993-94. The refurbishment of the interior of District and Metropolitan line rolling stock will be cancelled, as will work on the modernisation of various signals. Improvement programmes for public address systems will also be deferred. Surely there is a serious argument for spending whatever money we have available on upgrading the existing core network before embarking on a new project of this kind.

Another change made since 1988 has some bearing on the matter—the privatisation of British Rail, which, along with London Regional Transport, is sponsoring the crossrail project. The position is quite interesting. Under the previous arrangements, although the crossrail line will require 70 new train sets, British Rail had to account financially for only about six—the difference being made up by redeployment of orders already made for other services. As long as BR continued as a large organisation, such redeployments seemed reasonable, allowing a certain flexibility. The question that now arises is whether that flexibility can be retained. If it cannot, will there not be a substantial increase in the capital cost of crossrail?

I believe that the questions that I have raised justify a thorough and up-to-date review of crossrail's costing. If we have the costing, let it be published, together with the costings of alternative rail projects in London.

Another consideration, which has already been aired, must throw serious doubt on the whole project. The financing of crossrail will depend substantially on a major private sector contribution. I asked the Minister about the report from Warburgs and Bechtel, and we have had some exchanges about the matter. On 26 May, he told me:

> "The basis on which the private sector would contribute to the cost of the project will not be settled by 8 June."—[*Official Report*, 26 May 1993; Vol. 225, c. *571*.]

It is a pity that we could not use the information in today's debate.

The Minister tried to assure us that the private sector was willing and able to provide substantial finance. I did not find his argument entirely convincing—he may wish to intervene. My hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms Gordon) rightly mentioned the difficulty involved in the financing of the Jubilee line extension. Private sector money was raised because it served an obvious developmental purpose. As long as it was viable, Olympia and York considered the development attractive and was prepared—as a large firm—to make substantial sums available.

As we know, the firm is now in grave difficulties. The firms that have tried to take over from it, and the banks associated with it, have encountered considerable problems in agreeing to raise £400 million—which, although it is a considerable amount, is only about a quarter of the total cost.

In this instance, if I understood the Minister aright, we are talking about much more than a quarter of the cost of crossrail. This rail development could involve up to 50 per cent. private finance. I wonder how that will attract the private sector. For one thing, the crossrail project does not present the necessary developmental incentive: there is no Olympia and York standing at the end of the line, saying, "Come to me." The return on capital must be substantial to attract private capital on the required scale, given the investment alternatives.

Am I right in thinking that one essential component of the deal that the Minister is working out is that private return will be subsidised or that return on capital will be guaranteed by the Government? Both those methods may help the Minister to get around the PSBR restraints. I should like to be sure that I am following his thoughts correctly.

Mr. Norris: The right hon. Gentleman is correct to say that the Jubilee line extension is about a developer contribution—no more, no less. It is a "big developer contribution, but great value is being delivered. The right hon. Gentleman is correct to say that Olympia and York had no difficulty with that. Of course, it was difficult to put back the pieces after the company went into administration, but the principle remains coherent.

The right hon. Gentleman is correct to say that this is a different beast. It is a joint venture in which the Government foresee the partner taking on a much more proactive role as risk taker. It will earn a reward based on revenues that it will have some responsibility for generating by making its service attractive. It will earn a return on its investment that will be paralleled by investment from the public sector in order to reflect the non-user benefits—benefits that are real but are not captured by the fare box.

That is a straightforward concept. The right hon. Gentleman is a distinguished former Secretary of State and has dealt with similar projects. He is fair in his dealings with this matter. This is where we put the private sector in the driving seat, not endeavouring to earn a return across the whole of the potential capital outlay, but recognising that the public sector will contribute that which reflects the non-fare box benefits to the community.

In that context, the fact that the contribution will be substantially larger is of no great significance. It is a different type of project attracting a different type of participant.

Mr. Shore: That gives us a clearer idea of what is in the Minister's mind. I suspect that subsidy and guarantees on return of capital will be necessary to get any significant private investment because these rail projects are not inherently profitable. They are not natural areas for private investment of the scale that is now being thought of.

Given the state of our knowledge, the lack of an up-to-date survey of the project, the lack of a review of the alternatives and the hazy view of the funding arrangements, it would not be sensible for the House to give the Bill a Second Reading now. Therefore, I urge strongly that hon. Members support my motion to delay consideration of the Bill for another six months.

9.7 pm

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): I blocked this motion, together with the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), mainly because of the suggestion of a construction at Hayes which will allow trains on the crossrail link to go into Heathrow. I have no real objection to crossrail in principle, but I wonder whether the promoters of the Bill—London Underground and British Rail—should be allowed to play with model railways on the front room floor, let alone be involved in a project as important as this. I should have thought that their track record should preclude them from being involved. That is a personal view built up after sitting for seven years on the Transport Select Committee.

It seems strange that the promoters want to expand from the original concept of going east-west and west-east through London to pop in to Heathrow to fill up the gaps that will be left by the Heathrow express. As I said to my hon. Friend the Minister in an intervention, the idea of the Heathrow express was put to my constituents on the basis that it was essential to bring people from London, Paddington on a fast link to Heathrow because the underground and road links are bad. They were told that when the Paddington-Heathrow express was introduced, there would be no need for additional rail access to Heathrow.

My constituents reluctantly accepted it. I opposed it throughout and voted against it. We lost, but that is democracy. Now we have the concept of a fast link through London. The promoters say there will be a train from Paddington to Heathrow every 15 minutes and are wondering if they can slot in two or perhaps four additional trains a hour. They do not understand how it will affect people in my constituency.

Mr. Snape: Come on.

Mr. Dicks: The hon. Gentleman from a sedentary position says "Come on," but perhaps he should be aware that local opposition is mainly from the Labour party. My opponent at the last election is acting as the spokesman for petitioners against this scheme. Before he makes those comments and before those on the Labour Front Bench are so quick to support crossrail, perhaps they should bear in mind the fact they are talking with a forked tongue, locally and in the House.

Mr. Snape: I realise that any argument that the hon. Gentleman puts forward will be carefully weighed intellectually. He appears to be saying that he reluctantly accepted a railway line through his constituency, but that his constituents' lives would be more disturbed if that railway line were used by trains on a regular basis. With the greatest of respect, even from someone of the intellectual flexibility of the hon. Gentleman that appears not to be too sound an argument.

Mr. Dicks: The hon. Gentleman, with all his clever witticisms, has missed the point. He does not understand that the additional construction works needed for the crossrail trains will produce a worse environment for my constituents than there would have been with only the Heathrow express. If he feels that the lives of my constituents are so unimportant that he can be flippant, perhaps he should talk to his Labour party friends in my constituency, who feel even more strongly than I do. His flippant remarks, first from a sedentary position, are normal for the hon. Gentleman and are perhaps one reason why he has moved from the Labour Front Bench to the Back Bench.

Mr. Spearing: Three years ago when the Heathrow-Paddington fast link was proposed, I asked some questions about its extension into central London and the City. Are not the hon. Gentleman and his constituents, whatever their political allegiance, acting under some misapprehension? Is it not likely that there will be a service from Heathrow into Paddington and beyond, perhaps at 15-minute intervals and perhaps stopping at Southall or Ealing Broadway, which would be a very fast service and would perhaps provide a superior service to him, his constituents and users of Heathrow airport and not stopping at Paddington but going straight through?

Mr. Dicks: That may well be the case, but if there are to be trains going past the homes of my constituents every 15 minutes and guarantees and assurances are given along the lines of the development of the Heathrow express, the

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proposal that trains should be going past their homes constantly throughout the day is rather mean, to say the least.

The small viaduct that allows trains to come out of Hayes station and turn left towards Heathrow will have to be extended for the crossrail trains. I do not think it is as flippant a matter as the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) does.

Those who use Heathrow airport are beginning to believe that the need to develop the airport is of paramount importance for economic and financial reasons and to hell with the local community. The airport exists within the community and there has to be give and take on both sides.

Some airlines now want to fly their aeroplanes through the night. People want to extend the activities at Heathrow to the inconvenience of my constituents. Now crossrail wants to fill in the gaps between trains on the Heathrow express. Those people have to be reminded there is a community of people who live under the flight paths of aeroplanes at Heathrow with all the trials and tribulations. That should be brought to the attention of the promoters so that they bear it in mind in their further considerations.

Incidentally, my hon. Friend the Minister said just now that many of these matters are matters for the Committee. I was on the Committee which looked into the Dartford-Thurrock crossing and which made a unanimous recommendation about wind protectors on the bridge. When it came back to the Floor of the House, his Department overruled us and the Minister refused to believe what the Committee had decided. So how can we be sure that whatever the private Bill Committee suggests will be accepted by him and by his colleagues and pushed through? One does not know.

There is the problem of compensation. Perhaps I may read a short extract from a letter that I have received from a constituent:

"When the CPO is served we hope to move to another site but the compensation system will not provide funds in sufficient time to build another factory and gradually transfer production so that our work flow and output remain unaffected."

My constituent feels that if compensation arrangements can be made in good time ahead of the change, to enable his firm to move its facilities, keep its business and service its customers' needs, it will be helpful, but the indications are that this will not happen. I just wonder why something cannot be done about that.

It is interesting that at the time of the Budget the impression after the Chancellor's speech was that crossrail would be on a back burner. For some strange reason that has yet to be explained, it has suddenly come forward at a rush, with no indication of where the private sector finance is to come from. Will the Minister explain in due course why we have moved from putting it on the back burner to this effort to get the thing moving? My constituents are rightly concerned about this and, regardless of the views of some Opposition Members, they expect their views to be heard and taken into consideration by the promoters. They would just like to know what is going to happen.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes), as a Whip, cannot take part in the debate, but he is with us on the Front Bench. I know that he wishes to welcome the Second Reading and the important new rail connnections and speedier services that crossrail will bring for his constituents. He is grateful to the crossrail team for its careful work that led to the West Harrow sidings being moved to the north side of the tracks. These sidings will therefore be away from the houses in The Gardens, West Harrow which would otherwise be badly affected by the building work and the line when completed.

My hon. Friend would also like to pay tribute to the residents of The Gardens who campaigned with great skill and determination for this very sensible change—in particular, Mrs. Russell, who is not in the first flush of youth, but who provided the drive and enthusiasm for their campaign. A second petition from my hon. Friend's constituents was drawn up by the Pinner South residents association. They and my hon. Friend are grateful to the crossrail team for the time and trouble that it has taken to answer their concerns.

Provided that a few matters of interpretation of commitments are tidied up, the Pinner South residents association will withdraw its petition on a "first house" basis. What is vital to the association is that, where people have their whole outlook changed, trees and shrubs should be planted wherever feasible by crossrail to limit the intrusion.

I say that because my hon. Friend is unable to take part in the debate. My view is that of strong opposition to crossrail, not in its concept but in this minor change to Heathrow, whereas the views that I have put forward on behalf of my hon. Friend are fully in support of the crossrail scheme.

9.17 pm

Mr. Nick Harvey (North Devon): I shall briefly restate the support of the Liberal Democrats for the concept of crossrail and for this Second Reading, which is a vital but rather belated step along the way.

It is regrettable that the Government have not been more forthcoming about the financing of the scheme because, as other hon. Members have said, their record on other major transport infrastructure projects, such as the channel tunnel high-speed link and the Jubilee line extension, has not been encouraging. The danger is that we will see a repeat performance with this, and some of the remarks by the Minister in his intervention in the speech of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) have not given much encouragement in this regard.

I wonder why he is unable to acknowledge that the crossrail scheme is not entirely a commercial viability and therefore to recognise the concept of what I think he describes as a social benefit which will accrue from it. Then it is assumed that the Government should calculate that by seeing what the private sector is willing to put up by way of finance and assuming that the remainder is the balance.

There is a gap between those two and it is essential that the Government fill that gap if the whole thing is ever to come about, because a perfect marketplace does not, and never will, exist. During the recession it has been very difficult to get the private sector to come forward with the money for these projects. This was unfortunate because, with 500,000 construction workers unemployed, many of them could have been carried out at a much better price than will be achieved when they finally get under way, if indeed they ever do.

The need for a project of this sort is clear. The increase in passenger traffic during the 1980s and the projections of further passenger growth in the decades to come are compelling arguments and make it necessary to carry out this project as quickly as possible. The overcrowding on other services in the capital is becoming unbearable already and, if the situation at Liverpool street, for example, can be improved, it will undoubtedly benefit many people in east London and west Essex, as the Minister mentioned earlier.

The earlier comments by hon. Gentleman to the effect that there was no connection between the drastic announcement from ABB and the delay in this project —some two years between the Bill being deposited and its coming forward for Second Reading—were very strange. I think there is a clear and obvious connection. The order for class 341 trains to the value of £500 million on the order books of that company might have helped to avoid this week's unfortunate announcement.

I refer briefly to some of the problems. Without wishing to involve myself in the constituency affairs of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), I have been approached, as I am sure have many right hon. and hon. Members, by the London borough of Tower Hamlets, whose concern on behalf of its residents is understandable. There will undoubtedly be a price to be paid by people living in the area which the right hon. Gentleman has described. I endorse his suggestion that, if no more acceptable solution can be found, the prospect of a tunnel all the way to Stratford should not be lightly cast aside.

Compensation will be a matter of considerable concern to many and varied interests. That is something which the Committee will have to consider, as is the fact that many churches which are old and vulnerable structures are likely to be particularly at risk.

I believe that the House should give a Second Reading to the Bill as a statement of faith in London's future, but I believe strongly that the comments that have been made about the financing need to be addressed if this is not to become a complete white elephant.

9.22 pm

Mrs. Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham): First, I want to add my congratulations to those offered by my hon. Friends to my neighbour in Buckinghamshire, my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington). It is pretty arduous and demanding to have a Bill and a baby at the same time. Which one will prove the more demanding only the passage of time will tell.

It is amazing that Network SouthEast moves 426,000 people in and out of London every day, out of the total of 1,042,000 who enter London during the peak hours between 7 and 10 am. We therefore have the problem, to which other hon. Members have alluded, of improving the existing system. We need to increase the capacity and flexibility of our public transport system, which continues to grow under ever-growing demands. The system needs modernising because we need to be able to attract more users off the roads and to provide visitors to and residents in our capital city with the system that they need.

It therefore gives me great pleasure to welcome today the progress on the crossrail project, which is badly needed, in my view, to refresh parts that other transport proposals have not yet reached in our city.

I should like to congratulate the engineers who have been working so hard on the crossrail project. Given that a White Paper on science and technology—the first for 20 years—has been produced recently and that we are starting to value the contribution of engineers to our society, they deserve a mention in the debate. I am sure that many of my hon. Friends will join me in recognising their great contribution to technology.

As we have heard, the project will relieve overcrowding, both now and in the future, and will contribute to the infrastructure of the City, helping it to retain its position as a world leading financial centre. As a freeman of the City of London, I emphasise that that is close to my heart. The City of London corporation strongly supports the scheme, which it believes is good news for the quality of life of all Londoners. It welcomes the estimated employment effects: approximately 74,000 jobs in the planning and construction phases and a possible 25,000 new jobs in the city—the equivalent of filling 6 million sq ft of office space or more than half the space that is vacant in the city at present.

At the same time, the corporation, as a petitioner, has the opportunity to be present at the table to look at the details of the scheme with the promoters and to protect the interests of those affected by construction work. A scheme as large and imaginative as crossrail will inevitably cause disruption, but it will be for the greater and longer-term benefit of London and the surrounding areas. I am sure that what we have heard on the compensation arrangements will gladden the hearts of many of those affected.

I am sure that the dialogue with the corporation will continue to progress well, and the crossrail team has been making a good impression with those with whom it has been negotiating and carrying on discussion. The corporation said:

> "It may . . . be said that negotiations of a very helpful kind are proceeding between the Corporation and the Promoters, and there are gounds for optimism that they will be fruitful by the time a Committee stage is under way."

That bodes well for the future.

There will be disruption, and in my constituency there will be changes to all three of our stations—Chesham, Amersham and Chalfont and Latimer. Those stations will have to be altered with platform extensions, and I hope that their character will be protected and enhanced.

Both Chiltern district council and I are concerned about another matter—the car parking demand at all three of the sites. Parking has been a problem in the past and will remain an issue in the future. There has been some loose talk about cancelling the Aylesbury and/or the Chesham link, and I am pleased to see that enabling powers for that part of the route have been included in the Bill. It is essential that the crossrail project is completed right up to the Aylesbury link to ensure a more even spread and balance, certainly of park-and-ride commuters, who may travel from further afield to use this magnificent system. A greater recognition of the burden on local authorities at the end of the line should be taken on board by all the promoters and even perhaps by the Government when they are considering the standard spending assessments.

In the interests of the environment, we wish to encourage people to leave their cars and use an efficient public transport system, but we must ensure that they have safe secure areas in which to leave those cars. That is a particular problem at the Buckinghamshire end of the

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crossrail route, and I expect that matter to be considered carefully. Some time ago, one of my constituents wrote a letter to my predecessor, saying:

"Chesham needs its rail link to keep it on the map and for relief on our roads, and extra permanent car parking places —If Crossrail can bring these things to the Town it can't come soon enough."

I also seek reassurance on certain environmental matters such as tree lopping, which will be necessary in the Buckinghamshire area. We need to ensure that the overhead conductors are clear of our trees, but the county council has expressed concern about those arrangements and I hope that those details will be taken into consideration. Similarly, the fine detail of the five bridges that will have to be raised to accommodate the new service in my constituency will require close examination to ensure the minimum disruption for the inhabitants of Chesham and Amersham.

The county council strongly supports crossrail. In a letter to the Prime Minister in May, the council stated:

"Buckinghamshire County Council strongly supports the Cross Rail project and in particular the proposals for improvement to the London to Aylesbury link"—

which, of course, passes through my constituency. The council continued:

"Without this important investment the economic development of central and southern Buckinghamshire will be significantly frustrated . . . There is substantial local support for the Aylesbury-London Cross Rail project among the business community and among the local authorities. Any decision to drop the project or to postpone the Aylesbury link would be seen as a severe blow to all our efforts and would be very unpopular."

I hope that the promoters will continue their detailed consultations with county and district councils in relation to their concerns so that agreements can be reached on all sides.

I want to refer now to an issue about which I am not particularly satisfied at the moment, despite earlier discussions with the promoters—mobility-impaired access. Access is being provided at only 15 of the 41 surface stations. Although I recognise that step-free access will be available at all five central London stations, I am concerned about other areas such as my constituency.

It is proposed that in my constituency, access for disabled people will be made available at Amersham and Chesham, but not at Chalfont and Latimer because of its proximity to Amersham. I will be urging the promoters to reconsider that policy and I will press for an upgrading at Chalfont and Latimer. We are building a major transport system for the next century. For the marginal costs involved, particularly at this one station, I hope that the promoters will not seek to disadvantage a section of my constituents by not providing ease of access to a system which, after all, will last us for the next 50 years.

For any public transport system to be successful, it needs the basic criteria of accessibility, capacity and frequency. Let that accessibility be for all. Capacity and frequency are being increased and both will be welcomed by all travellers. They will particularly welcome the links to Heathrow and the channel tunnel route.

My constituents in Chesham and Amersham welcome the crossrail project. It represents a vital upgrading which will improve their access to other parts of the capital, the country and the continent. I wish the Bill well.

9.32 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan) referred to her constituency and I have a query about the map that the promoters have supplied.

However, I want to take a much wider view about the promotion and to begin by saying that if an hon. Member who was in this place in the 1850s were suddenly to return today, he would find himself on familiar ground. In the late 1850s, there were a number of Bills before the House, one of which succeeded and established the Metropolitan railway. The Metropolitan railway was the first London crossrail and virtually the first underground railway in the world. Questions of finance, planning, services, facilities and safety and all the issues which the Committee will discuss were also live issues 140 years ago.

There are more similarities than may be apparent. The hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham referred to the City of London corporation. I am glad to say that the Metropolitan railway owed something to the then perhaps enlightened City of London with regard to its construction. At that time the City was engaged in slum clearance in the Fleet valley. As new roads were being built, it was decided to build the railway beneath them. That happened below what used to be called New road and which we now call Euston road.

At that time, there were also discussions about the salubrious residential areas of Paddington which would be connected to the City by the new rapid means of transport. No doubt the directors of the then Great Western railway saw an opportunity to extend their trains to the City. Hon. Members will be surprised to know that, until 1939, trains ran from Southall to Paddington, where an electric locomotive was put on and people were taken through to Aldgate. It is not a new idea. I see that the hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) has gone—*[Interruption.]* I am glad to see that he is still here.

The first terminus of the Metropolitan railway was at platforms 1 and 2 at Liverpool Street. Until recently, there was a link in the tunnel from the Metropolitan railway to the Great Eastern railway at Liverpool Street which was used by trains until 1904. Coincidentally, the last train to use that link was a railway excursion from Aylesbury to Great Yarmouth via the Metropolitan railway at Liverpool street, so we are not talking about anything new.

The finance of that railway was a major feature of discussions in the House at that time, and my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) rightly referred to that. It is not simply finance for the building and the rate of return. After all, even with dense traffic, not much revenue will be coming in over the expensive five miles of tunnel, with the stations, the lifts and escalators, ventilation and so on.

The Government are complicating matters through the other legislation in another place. When I asked the Minister who would own the railway, he talked at the end of his speech about finance, which was most interesting, but not about ownership. The first crossrail company that gave those extra facilities was the Metropolitan Railway Company. It owned the track and the tunnels, signalled the trains and allowed the Great Western to come in at one end and the Great Eastern at the other end.

The second crossrail company was the District Railway Company, with its original terminus at Mansion House. At one time, one could walk to Westminster underground

station and get a train to Windsor via the link at Ealing Broadway. Indeed, until the outbreak of war, one could get a train at Ealing Broadway and go all the way to Southend. We are not talking about anything new; we are talking about a new method of railway control. Who will run all the links to which the hon. Member for Aylesbury referred, and which the Minister rightly emphasised? Will they be run by the group of people listed by the Secretary of State in his recent press release? Will that provide the sort of rigidity that might not be for the benefit of everyone involved? As the Metropolitan railway provided that facility in its initial phase before it settled down as an inter-urban track, there is a certain rigidity in the maps provided.

I shall refer to such matters because we must think of this important tunnel with its facility in much wider regional terms than has been accepted so far. Indeed, the concept of a fast deep railway is not new. Such railways were built in New York about the turn of the century. In the 1920s, the Metropolitan and District lines had plans for deep-level tubes as express tubes to relieve congestion on the original routes.

Let us examine the wider aspects, especially the routes, frequencies and services that may be provided. The hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham referred to the problems at that end of the line. What has not been made clear—although it may be in some of the literature that I have read—is whether the Metropolitan line service for rail electric as far as Amersham will be extended further or whether there will be electrification from there to Aylesbury. Presumably, the fast crossrail will provide the fast services, perhaps stopping at Harrow and Amersham and then stopping at Aylesbury, as will probably be confirmed.

Mr. Lidington: To assist the hon. Gentleman, the proposal is that, once crossrail is operational on that branch, the services that are provided at present by the Chilton line of British Rail from Marylebone to Aylesbury and those provided by London Underground from Baker Street to Amersham will be taken over by a crossrail route that serves Aylesbury and the intervening stations listed on the map through to Paddington. Trains will go to Paddington, rather than to Marylebone. The Metropolitan line will continue to run its service, stopping at all its present stations to Watford and Uxbridge.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for putting that on the record in the Second Reading debate. The debate is an opportunity to clear up points that people want to raise. The Committee will be able to refer to them.

There is some rigidity in the plan. Other options west of London might be considered and taken up. Everyone has said that the project will last for 50 or 100 years, so we should consider all the options now and ask why they have not been chosen. The hon. Member for Aylesbury mentioned some of the terminals at Paddington. What about Old Oak to High Wycombe? The line goes along the back of Old Oak depot. What about that magnificent line built in the early years of this century? It is a fast and wide railway from Old Oak junction up to High Wycombe. There are plenty of places along the line. I know that they are served by Marylebone at present, but the line is a possibility.

Reading is shown as the terminal. Of course, it will be, if electrification goes to Reading. Are we to suppose that, Governments permitting, there will not be electrification beyond Reading, perhaps to Oxford? What about the Bristol main line? I am sure that Brunel would be shocked that we have not electrified his wonderful railway of that wide gauge, of which I shall say more in a moment.

What about the Heathrow link? I intervened in the speech of the hon. Member for Aylesbury to ask about trains from Heathrow to perhaps anywhere east—perhaps Ilford or Shenfield. More logically, a link could go up the Lea Valley to Stansted airport. That would provide some airport logic, if nothing else.

One of the puzzles of the western entry is that the planned route of the crossrail proposal crosses the west coast main line overhead. There is already a rail chord joining it. Is there no possibility of trains coming down the west coast main line and occasionally using crossrail? That could happen perhaps at weekends—on Saturdays or perhaps for a rally at Hyde park on a Sunday. There is no reason why the Sunday services should not run at different times, as they do in other parts of London to respond to changed demand. I am sure that they will. If this magnificent facility is built, it will provide that great flexibility.

What about east London? The flexibility there is perhaps even greater. I have already mentioned the Lea Valley line up to Stansted airport and perhaps as far as Cambridge. The line is electrified in any case, with fast electric trains with sliding doors which go at about 100 miles an hour. Kings Lynn or Norwich would certainly be within range. I am sure that the Secretary of State would be interested in that.

What about the Chingford link? Chingford is being excluded from the possibilities. The line runs through Walthamstow. I told my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow——

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): For Leyton.

Mr. Spearing: It is in the same borough. I told my hon. Friend the railway story, which deserves repetition, of the old lady before the war at Liverpool Street, from which a 10-minute jazz steam service ran up and down to Enfield and Chingford. She said to a porter, "Please my man, when is the last train to Walthamstow?" The porter said, "Lawd bless you ma'am, there ain't no last train to Walthamstow." The trains ran every hour through the night. Yet Walthamstow is not being included as a possibility for crossrail.

The greatest conundrum has been referred to only in passing. The Government place great emphasis on the east Thames corridor, yet no Tilbury through line is shown, even though the electrified lines already exist. Another conundrum is the connection, if any, with Union Rail. The Government have said that fast trains will run from Kent into the Stratford area. Why should people from Kent be deprived of going direct to Oxford street to shop? Why should the people of Chatham not have the facilities that the people of Amersham already have? I do not know the answer, but at least there is a possibility. Such a link may not be the immediate plan, but there is nothing to stop it in the long run.

The biggest anomaly is the beauty contest that the Government have precipitated between Ebbsfleet, which is adjacent to Chatham, and Rainham and Stratford. Union Rail is not too keen on any international station at Stratford being defined as the terminus for international

[Mr. Spearing]

trains. There will be some sort of competition—that is not too strong a description of what will happen—between now and October, and I do not want to prejudice it. My Newham membership will indicate where my sympathies lie.

There is a lack of railway logic in the project. It has appeared as a gaping hole, at least in the technical thinking. That is illustrated in the concern of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) for Allen gardens and the junction with the Great Eastern suburban lines. At present, the operators are thinking of an old-fashioned flat-level junction near Allen gardens to join up with the suburban lines of the Great Eastern. If there is to be an international station at Stratford, perhaps on the north of the present station, with good connections, crossrail should be linked to that. There is at least a possibility of taking the tunnels a few hundred yards or a mile further east. There are sites readily available which would provide a good junction from crossrail not only to the suburban lines of the Great Eastern and to a link to Tilbury, but also to the fast lines to Norwich, the Lea valley and, possibly, Stansted. That would not cost much extra, bearing in mind the great cost of tunnelling in central London.

We should consider this not just in terms of the routes on the map, but as an imaginative public transport facility for the 21st century which is combined with inter-city transport and, no doubt, international transport through what the Minister interestingly calls the CTRL, which I translate as the channel tunnel rail link—not Union Rail.

I return to my opening theme. Who will own the track and run the stations? Will people be able to use a future travelcard on this link? I know that the Minister has strong views on that. Will crossrail be part of a super Network SouthEast of rapid inter-urban modern trains running at high speed and connected perhaps to some of the routes to the south which were electrified in the 1930s? Or will it be made impossible to operate through financial arrangements that the Government are embarking on now, whereby the running of trains, the management of track, finance, the return on capital and the operation of joint stations—which there is bound to be with London Transport or whatever remains of it—will be complicated?

Will we have in the centre of London the problems that are spread around the country and that are implicit in the legislation that we have been contemplating? *[Interruption.]* I am glad to see the Minister for Public Transport coming into the Chamber at this point. So far, all that that legislation has presented has been complication after complication and difficulty after difficulty. If Railtrack does not survive—I cannot see it doing so—one of the agencies to operate, own and be responsible for the track will disappear.

To return to the theme with which I started, legislators of 140 years ago, tackling similar problems to those of today—most of the essence of this issue was present then—would be astonished and astounded that the Government are not contemplating a single operational entity responsible for this imaginative five to six miles of tunnel through which many services might come. We hope that there might be flexibility over the years as strategic planning gets back on the map. We hope that this will serve London as its urban railways have done and serve it well. These issues must be faced fairly and squarely and dealt with properly in Committee.

The instruction proposed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney would ensure that that happens, and I was glad to hear the hon. Member for Aylesbury say that that will not be excluded from consideration. If any petitioner brings that up, he should be listened to with care and attention, because without proper co-ordination and proper arrangements to provide facilities for passengers and flexible ticketing of the type that has been successful in London in the past few years, the project will not be the success that it deserves to be.

9.49 pm

Mr. Hartley Booth (Finchley): I add to the warm congratulations that have been heaped on my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) on acting as sponsor of the Bill and introducing it at short notice tonight. I also welcome the Government's support, both financial and general, for the Bill.

It may be regarded as something of a curiosity that I, as the Member for Finchley, whose constituency is on the north-south Northern line, have the temerity to speak in a debate on the east-west route. I am concerned, however, about the general benefits of the project deriving to the City, London and my constituency and I have some interest in urban regeneration as I am the immediate past chairman of the British Urban Regeneration Association.

The course of the debate has led to one certain conclusion—our capital city needs the best form of infrastructure. No city can live, breathe or prosper without such infrastructure. At the moment cars move around London at an average speed of just 7 mph. There is notorious and widespread congestion on the underground. The Northern line, which will be served by crossrail, has a well-known congestion spot at Tottenham Court road. I hope that that will improve with the intersection with crossrail.

Repeated reference has been made to the risk to future investment in the City if we do not provide adequate infrastructure. I echo what my hon. Friends the Members for Aylesbury and for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan) have said and emphasise it. Given that Singapore Hong Kong and Jakarta, on the ever more wealthy Pacific rim, are providing splendid new infrastructure to compete with west Europe, surely it is right for London to provide the best possible infrastructure. It is vital that we undertake projects such as crossrail.

I am persuaded from discussions with the promoters that the speed improvements—a saving of half an hour on the line from Aylesbury into central London and a quarter of an hour from Reading into central London—together with the comfort of the new trains and rolling stock, will mean fewer cars will travel on the roads in central London. That would be a crucial spin-off benefit of the Bill.

Concern has been expressed, however, about the disturbance that the project will cause. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) referred to that in connection with his end of the proposed tunnel. According to the promoters, 20 work sites will disgorge earth and soil from the ground; 16 of which will involve the movement of 100 lorries a day. That noise and disturbance will continue for up to three years of the projected five-year span of the project.

When faced with the stark facts, the promoters say that they are only too happy to abide by the construction industry's best code of practice, which means that no lorries will emerge from the work sites at night. The disturbance caused by digging and other extraction from the tunnel will be minimised. I hope that those disturbance problems will be ironed out in Committee. I have spoken to the promoters and I am satisfied that they are bearing the problems in mind and trying to ensure that our city, which needs the infrastructure, will suffer as little as possible during the construction stage.

I support the Bill, not because it will provide a kick start, as the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) suggested—I hope that it will be more of an electrical start—but because it will improve infrastructure in the working as well as the investment environment. I also support it because of the spin-offs that it will provide for my Finchley constituency—through Tottenham Court Road and the fact that it will mean fewer cars on the roads in all surburban parts of London. I believe that the project is well designed and a good buy. It will provide 150 km of new concept railway from a tunnel that is only 10 km long —it is demonstrably a good buy.

The project has a wider general benefit. The improvements that we gain tonight by way of the Crossrail Bill will, I hope, tomorrow apply to the Northern line.

9.57 pm

Mr. Mike Gapes (Ilford, South): I speak as a Member of Parliament who represents a constituency which has a station on the crossrail line but which will not, as far as I know, be substantially changed. There are strong arguments for improving Ilford station which we could consider. I believe that the Bill and the project should be supported as a necessary but insufficient step towards improving transport from east London and Essex across London.

If crossrail becomes a reality, it will significantly reduce travel time to Paddington. It will make it possible for people from my constituency to travel to Heathrow airport without having to allow two hours to get there and then waiting an hour for a plane which might be delayed. It is a long journey from Ilford and parts of north-east London to Heathrow airport. If the developments, including a possible change at Heathrow and the crossrail link to Heathrow are achieved, they will greatly benefit my constituents.

I have a number of concerns about the Bill. I do not want to repeat what has been said by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and my hon. Friends the Members for Bow and Poplar (Ms Gordon) and for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). We must consider an integrated long-term plan for public transport in our capital city. The hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) referred to 1947 and the development of the Central line. He may not be aware that London Transport is currently proposing to stop trains running between Epping and Ongar.

Over the years there have been significant cuts in the Hainault to Woodford line. Anyone who travels on the Central line into central London and stands on the overcrowded platforms at Leytonstone or Leyton when trains are delayed, as my constituents do, will know that it becomes positively dangerous for any more trains to empty their passengers on to the platforms as there is no space. People who travel on that line will know of the need for significant improvements, as well as proper integration with the British Rail link.

We must consider the channel tunnel—its connection to Stratford and a passenger interchange at Stratford, which is vital. In that way we could take some of the pressure off the existing Central line.

But the real answer lies in investment in public transport. I refer not simply to crossrail but to the whole gamut of public transport services in London. I am especially worried on that count when I recall that last year's autumn statement led to drastic cuts in the investment funds available to London Transport. That has resulted in LT not being able to do the job that we all accept is necessary. Investment is vital if public transport in the capital is to work more efficiently. To achieve efficiency, we must have the necessary resources, yet we know from what has occurred with the Jubilee line and the channel tunnel that we cannot rely on hypothetical private sector investment——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Crossrail Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until Midnight.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

Question again proposed, That the Bill be read a Second time.

Mr. Gapes: We cannot leave it to the whims of the private sector to do the job. Proper public investment is necessary, so while I support the Bill, I remain wary lest it is the precursor of further privatisation of London's public transport system.

10.1 pm

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) on taking the Bill forward. It is particularly welcome to me because it means that a matter of great and direct importance to my constituency is in the hands of an extremely capable and trusted hon. Friend and neighbour.

A glance at the map shows that my constituency is shaped like a funnel. Many people dribble down it into Aylesbury, so the line there is vital to many of my constituents, particularly bearing in mind the fact that my area is not well served by large roads. Clearly, we have a strong interest in the Bill and we welcome crossrail proceeding through to the Aylesbury link.

Access to London by road from my part of the world is highly problematical, as anyone who has traversed Western avenue will know. Road works along it are eternal. The A413 is in part reduced to what resembles a single track country road. It is all very primitive and old-fashioned and we need a modern high-speed, low-priced—an important point, to which I shall come —railway such as exists in some curious countries on the mainland of Europe.

The Minister should not be too upset at displays of scepticism over some financial aspects of the proposal. I am sorry to say that I vibrated a little in sympathy with some of the arguments adduced by the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson). I say that because scepticism is justified when we remember that we have no examples of such grandiose ideas of public-private railway systems functioning, not just in this but in analogous countries.

[Mr. George Walden]

Others, like me, find when they are abroad that private telephones work, so we vote for them here; that private electricity companies work, so we vote for them here; and that private water companies work, so we vote for them here. But I do not vote for the privatisation of railways for the simple and pragmatic reason that I have not experienced many of them abroad. Indeed, I have not used them abroad and, as a Conservative, I like the idea of seeing things working before I vote for them.

Hence, like some Opposition Members, I am worried about the financial future of the Bill. While hon. Members on both sides are saying that it is a grand idea, I am left wondering who will pay for it.

I differ from Opposition Members in that I am ready to say that I would like the Government to adopt a much more centralising, strategic role in transport planning, but I also believe it logically impossible to want that without stating where the money will come from. So, in order to maximise Government spending as necessary on proper transport schemes we must be perfectly honest about where the money will come from. It should, of course, come from a diminution of universal benefits and tax breaks, such as mortgage tax relief, which damage our economy. That money should be put into transport as a prime area of investment, to strengthen our economy.

Anyone who believes that this is a quirky view should read the article in *The Daily Telegraph* today, written by Mr. Howard Davies, the director of the CBI, who singles out transport as the prime area in which the Government should invest for the benefit of industry and the country.

I do not want to sound too doubtful. I should be delighted if the Government came up with a viable and swift scheme for public-private co-operation. That is what my constituents want. Conversely, I would be pretty fed up —as would many of my constituents—if this beautiful idea evaporated because it was not anchored in sensible finance.

10.6 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I should like to add my belated congratulations to the hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) on his double joy of a baby and a Bill. I assure him that there will be a lot more bills to follow the birth of the baby—but not of the parliamentary variety. It is just as well that the gestation period of his wife's baby was not as long as that of this Bill, which has taken some years to progress from conception to Second Reading.

I listened with great care to the speech by the silver-tongued Minister. I am afraid that I came to the conclusion that the Government's transport policy, particularly for London, was drawn up by Samuel Beckett. The Minister will of course recall that Beckett wrote a famous play called "Waiting for Godot". Clearly that principle seems to attend the Government's transport policy in respect of crossrail and a number of other proposed ventures. He will also remember, as he is a classically trained literary gent, that the two main characters in the play were Gogo and Didi, two tramps. I find it difficult to envisage the Minister of State as a tramp, the more so in view of the cut of his Saville Row whistle and of the amount of gold in his Rolex watch, which I understand the new Chancellor has been eyeing up enviously—working on the assumption that there is probably as much gold in that watch as he will get from a new tax hike.

It is a lot easier to see the more crumpled and sartorially challenged Secretary of State as one of Beckett's tramps. Like Gogo and Didi, the two Ministers sit under the tree waiting for something to turn up. Today, crossrail; yesterday, the Jubilee line extension; the day before, the channel tunnell so-called fast rail link to London.

In London, all we get from these two political tramps is unending talk, press releases galore and interminable newspaper stories with headings such as, "Minister/ Government gives green light to crossrail—or Jubilee line extension, or something else". Then come all the follow-ups about the doubts and question marks, the delays and rethinks:

"Jubilee line extension faces the axe";

"Ministers consider flotation to fund tunnel rail link".

The idea of floating a tunnel is rather wonderful.

"Minister minimises Jubilee line snag";

"A compromise to get Jubilee line back on track".

The only consistent theme in all these schemes is that, rather like Godot, they never show up. I hope to continue my literary allusion a little longer, by adding that I trust that the Minister is familiar with the fact that Gogo and Didi contemplate hanging themselves on the tree if Godot does not arrive. Even in my darkest moments, I would not urge such a solution on the Minister or the Secretary of State; apart from anything else, they would probably bungle it. But I wonder how much longer they can hang on to their political credibility, in the absence of political action.

Recent talk on the street, as they say, was that the Minister had had enough: that he was becoming depressed, rather like the Prime Minister. This highly successful seller of secondhand Rollers—as we know he used to be—had eventually been laid low by his failure to sell a third-rate transport policy to London. I am glad to say, however, that the Minister is still with us, hanging on in there like a driver in a clapped-out Lada, wondering whether the wheels will drop off before or after his big end goes. What a way not to run a railway!

Opposition Members want crossrail to go ahead, and we shall vote for the Bill's Second Reading. However, we shall do so without illusion. I am not convinced that the project will come about while the present Government are in office. On this occasion, I hope that I am proved wrong; but I have a distinct feeling that, rather like the grand old Duke of York, the Minister is marching us up the hill tonight only to march us down again tomorrow. As other hon. Members have pointed out, if crossrail is built, it will relieve heavy congestion on the most overcrowded sections of London's existing underground network, and will take much traffic off the roads. We would welcome that in London and the south-east; it makes great sense, which is why—as my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) said earlier—the original proposal came from the Greater London council.

We are worried by the estimated cost of £2 billion during the period to 1999. The Minister has given us no guarantee in regard to where the money will come from. Earlier, a little interchange took place in the Division Lobby between my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) and myself. Like a number of other Labour Members from outside London, he asked why all this investment should go into London.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): It was nice to see my hon. Friend. We normally see him on the television.

Mr. Banks: My hon. Friend is becoming very jealous, bitter and twisted in his old age. I understand that our right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) recently failed to turn up on the television programme "Have I Got News For You" for the third time; perhaps my hon. Friend could stand in for the right hon. tub of lard that replaced him. He is certainly substantial enough adequately to represent the former deputy leader of the Labour party.

Let me tell my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow, and other Opposition Members representing constituencies outside London, that we are not just discussing investment in London. Projects such as crossrail and the Jubilee line extension mean jobs in manufacturing industry outside the greater London area. My hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow said that crossrail would not provide shipbuilding jobs on the Tyne; as I told him, it would be very difficult to run ships on crossrail, but—given all the assurances provided by the hon. Member for Aylesbury in his attempt to get the Bill through tonight—he will no doubt assure my hon. Friend that that will be done if at all possible.

The former Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the appointment of consultants in his Budget speech on 16 March. Their reports have been presented to him. The Bechtel report has proposed some cost adjustments, and S. G. Warburg—appointed to assess the viability and options for private finance—has reported favourably. I hope that, in fairness to the House and the Standing Committee, the Minister will make those reports available, because they are very important. The Minister said that they contained favourable comments about the financing of crossrail; I think it incumbent on the Government to present them to members of the Standing Committee, so that they can make their decisions on an informed basis.

The Minister understands a bit about money. Why does he not talk ackers? The hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) rightly pulled him up on this. How much will the private sector contribute to crossrail? The Minister said that the private sector wanted to see the legislation in place, and that it would then consider. He cannot have it both ways.

The Minister said that in the reports, the private sector said that it was favourably inclined towards crossrail. How can he now say that it wants to see the legislation in place before coming up with a definite deal? The Minister did not give the House enough assurances, and he certainly did not satisfy his hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden).

There was no indication of the proportion expected to be forthcoming from the private sector or on what basis it would wish to participate. The Minister has to answer many more questions, if not in the House, they must be answered when evidence is being taken in Committee. The Minister gave no guarantee about the Government's financial commitment. This looks to us to be something akin to the Jubilee line extension. We are waiting for it and the Minister keeps assuring us that everyone thinks that it is a good idea and that money is forthcoming. When is it to happen? The Minister must answer that question.

My borough of Newham has petitioned against the Bill because, among other things, it wants to secure full disabled access at all stations, to all platforms on all the rail services covered by Crossrail. I hope that the hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) will say something about that, because there has been no mention of disabled access so far. Crossrail proposes disabled access only to Stratford and other central London stations.

Notwithstanding what I have said, we wish the Bill well. However, we will not hold our breath while we wait for crossrail to be constructed.

10.16 pm

Mr. Norris: With the leave of the House, I should like to make a brief reply. I enjoyed the speech of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). It was wonderful—a real pleasure. I have always felt diffident about the fact that the hon. Gentleman is clearly obsessed with my life style. Scarcely a day goes by when he does not either make an offer for my car or, on occasions, for my watch, which is an extraordinary implement which does not even tell the time very well. There is not a word of inscription on the back, either in English or in Latin. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will keep this strictly between us.

On one occasion, the hon. Member for Newham, North-West wanted to know more about my tailor. He happened to be enjoying a ride in my ministerial limousine at the time. It does not give me much pleasure to record these facts, but I lay them on the record because it is important to understand them.

Mr. Dixon: Did my hon. Friend have on his chairman's chain when he was in the ministerial limousine?

Mr. Norris: The hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) is a shrewd judge in these matters.

This is all good, jolly knockabout stuff, but it misses an essential point. The Labour party has an extraordinary sterility on the business of investment in infrastructure in Britain. It has only one solution—the taxpayer must pay. There is no equivocation, it is always the taxpayer who pays. The Conservative party believes—it seems to be beyond peradventure—that there are many opportunities for investment, and I must tell my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) that there are many examples of such opportunities internationally, where the private sector has been able to co-operate with Governments to take great projects forward. I have no doubt that crossrail will be an example of just such a successful project.

10.18 pm

Mr. Lidington: With the leave of the House, I wish to thank all hon. Members who have taken part in the debate, and who have, in the main, supported the Crossrail project. I wish to thank them also for their remarks about my domestic circumstances. I shall make sure that a copy of the Bill and the relevant copy of the *Official Report* are stored with the christening robe and the silver-plated tea spoon.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) asked a direct question about access for the disabled. He was slightly unfair to my hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan) who alluded to that in her speech, but as the Member of Parliament who represents the Stoke Mandeville spinal injuries unit, I shall make sure that those points are conveyed to the promoters of the Bill.

[Mr. Lidington]

I can tell the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) that nothing in the Bill or the crossrail project would preclude the additional junctions or the electrification which he seeks. It is open to railway operators in future to take that course if they so choose.

I can assure the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) that the promoters accept utterly that they have a duty to do right by the people of Bethnal Green and the people of Hayes as much as by the people living in Mayfair or other plusher parts of central London, or indeed the leafy shires. The promoters have already been in touch with many community representatives in the areas represented by the right hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend. They will continue to do that and will take note of the points that have been raised tonight.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney made some broader criticisms of the Bill. I shall not reply to them at length because they were dealt with in my speech and that of my hon. Friend the Minister except to say that passenger forecasts may have proved wrong because of the severe and long-lasting recession in London and the south-east, but despite the recession there is congestion on the Central line and at Paddington and Liverpool Street stations which demonstrates the need for the additional link that crossrail will provide.

With the economic recovery now under way, there is every prospect that the project will not only bring many thousands of new jobs in the construction industry to London and the south-east but will provide a first-class railway link in London and the south-east which will serve the region's and the capital's economy well for many years to come. I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Does the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) wish to move the instruction? I see that he does not.

Question put and agreed to.

Read a Second time and referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills.

Legal Aid

10.22 pm

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): I beg to move,

That the Legal Aid (Financial Conditions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1993 (S.R. (N.I.), 1993, No. 121), dated 11th March 1993, a copy of which was laid before this House on 18th March, be revoked.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): I understand that with this it will be convenient to discuss at the same time the following motions:

That the Legal Advice and Assistance (Financial Conditions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1993 (S.R. (N.I.), 1993, No. 123), dated 11th March 1993, a copy of which was laid before this House on 18th March, be revoked.

That the Legal Aid (Assessment of Resources) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1993 (S.R. (N.I.), 1993, No. 122), dated 15th March 1993, a copy of which was laid before this House on 18th March, be revoked.

That the Legal Advice and Assistance (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1993 (S.R. (N.I.), 1993, No. 124), dated 15th March 1993, a copy of which was laid before this House on 18th March, be revoked.

Mr. McNamara: The original purpose of the legal aid scheme was that all people, regardless of their means, should have access to the legal system; not only the poorest in our society, but also those of moderate means who could not otherwise afford to litigate.

"We are committed to enabling people with limited means to have access to justice."

So said the discredited Conservative party manifesto of last year. The original aim of the legal aid scheme has now been sabotaged by Government cuts.

It seems clearly contradictory that a Government who boast about their citizens charter, much good though it has done citizens and Government, is, through the regulations, denying those same citizens the chance of enforcing their rights by cutting legal aid, and no more severely than in Northern Ireland.

There is no doubt that the regulations will have a severely restrictive effect on the availability of justice and many people will now be denied access to legal aid in Northern Ireland.

The lower limit below which a person is entitled to receive legal aid without payment of a contribution has been reduced from £3,060 to £2,294, with the upper limit remaining at £7,500 per annum for personal injuries cases and £6,800 for all others. That, coupled with the increase in the fraction of disposable income which is payable by way of contribution to one quarter to one third of the difference between that person's disposable income and the lower free limit, will have the combined effect of depriving a significant number of people in Northern Ireland of the ability and the right to seek justice.

The figures concerning the changes in Northern Ireland are not readily available, but in a written reply to a question of mine, the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, said that

"the effect of the introduction of the new regulations will be a small decrease in the proportion of households eligible for legal aid. It is estimated that this reduction will be in the region of two percentage points."—[*Official Report*, 19 April 1993; Vol. 223, c. 9.]

He also indicated that more households would be made to pay increased contributions.

I believe that the figures and the suggestions put forward by the Parliamentary Secretary are misleading and that the effect on people in Northern Ireland will be even more severe than the hon. Gentleman predicts, as there are more people on lower wages there than in the rest of the United Kingdom.

The Government's failure to publish figures shows all too clearly their "don't know, don't care" attitude and exposes the measures for what they really are—Treasury-inspired, ill thought out and with no consideration for the prospective litigants seeking justice in the courts.

The figures of the number of people affected in England, Wales and Scotland range from hundreds of thousands to many millions. I do not wish to play the numbers game because no one knows what the figures really are. The thing that matters is that not one single person should be denied an opportunity to obtain justice. But to satisfy the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his autumn statement, money is to be saved at the expense of justice. That is not a proper basis for the changes to the legal aid system set out in these regulations. Any alteration should come about as a result of a thorough and comprehensive review of the cost-effectiveness of the legal aid system, something which has been generally lacking throughout the United Kingdom and especially in Northern Ireland.

In England and Wales, the Law Society and the Bar Council put forward an alternative package of proposals which they believed would save the Treasury £43 million and protect the eligibility levels. I have contacted the Law Society in Northern Ireland. It, too, was willing to consider any and all ways to cut costs, but, because of the profound lack of consultation surrounding these measures, the Law Society proposals have not been given the consideration that they undoubtedly deserve. The Law Society in Northern Ireland invited the Lord Chancellor some time ago to discuss the best ways to implement measures and it is still waiting for a reply.

My office has also been in touch in the past week with the office of the Lord Chief Justice in Northern Ireland and, although not wishing to comment on actual cuts in eligibility, he has assured me that he has been active in seeking to resolve the differences beween the Lord Chancellor, the Law Society in Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Bar. We wish him well in his future efforts in very testing circumstances and we hope that he has more luck in influencing the Lord Chancellor than has his counterpart, Lord Taylor, in England or, for that matter, any interested body in England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman would give the House an undertaking that in the future, before such regulations are brought forward from the Lord Chancellor's Department, it will work closely with all the relevant groupings in Northern Ireland because it has singularly failed to do so in this instance. Will he also give the House an undertaking that if agreed savings can be found between the professions and the Lord Chancellor's Department it will be possible to restore the cuts in eligibility in the near future?

Opposition Members had hoped that some credit might be given for the fact that in Northern Ireland expenditure on legal aid per head of population is significantly lower than in England and Wales and that the average cost of all cases is also lower. I realise that it may be unfair to compare costs because we are not always comparing like with like, but I feel that these are relevant figures. In

[Mr. McNamara]

England and Wales the average cost of a case was £2,008, in Scotland £815 and in Northern Ireland only £613. So for the sake of argument, even if there was a case for the cuts to be made in legal aid—I do not believe for one second that there is—surely there is even less of a case for these measures to be applied to Northern Ireland than there is in England, Wales and Scotland.

Once again, an English solution to an English problem has been exported and imposed upon the people of Northern Ireland without any regard for the logic or the justice of the situation. These cuts have been introduced without particular research into the effects that they will have on Northern Ireland.

It is impossible to impose basically the same regulations on Northern Ireland when its history is so different. Northern Ireland has generally suffered higher unemployment and poverty levels and the present conflict makes access to legal aid perhaps more fundamental, more necessary, than anywhere else.

Of course, it is possible to argue that Northern Ireland, like Scotland, has been spared a certain amount of the harshness of the cuts, as the contributory part of the green form scheme has not been ended and the contribution liability will not continue throughout the life of the case, but will be limited to one year. This should, of course, be welcomed, as far as it goes, but it is more a sign of incompetence and lack of research on the part of the Lord Chancellor's Department in failing to recognise that different laws affect Northern Ireland than of any show of leniency by the Government to the people of Northern Ireland.

Furthermore, we should be under no illusion that these parts of the cuts in eligibility will not be ended. In a written reply in another place to an inquiry whether the changes in eligibility in England and Wales would largely be extended to Northern Ireland, the Lord Chancellor stated:

> It is not possible, under the present enabling powers in Northern Ireland, for regulations to be brought forward immediately to give effect to two of the changes which have been made in England and Wales—namely, the extension of the payment of contributions over the lifetime of the case and the abolition of the contributory part of the legal advice and assistance scheme. Nevertheless I intend to bring forward legislation, as soon as a suitable opportunity arises, to enable the Northern Ireland civil legal aid eligibility criteria to be fully aligned with those in England and Wales."—[*Official Report*, House of Lords, 14 April 1993; Vol. 544, c. 73.]

The Lord Chancellor may regard this as a promise; I regard it as a threat.

I, and I am sure most hon. Members, hope that, before such a move is made proper research will be carried out to assess the consequences, although on experience this seems highly unlikely and the people of Northern Ireland will, as a result, suffer for it.

I was under the impression, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that Whips were silent. They are also, apparently, deaf.

Therefore, I ask the hon. and learned Gentleman——

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (Mr. John M. Taylor): Not learned.

Mr. McNamara: I take the hon. Gentleman's word for it that he is not learned. Certainly the content of his regulations when they came before us were not. But I assume that he is an honourable man. Therefore I ask the hon. Gentleman to give an undertaking to present an extensive consultation paper before these further changes are proposed.

It is vital for the Government to commission a wide-ranging and detailed study into the effects of the legal aid eligibility cuts throughout Northern Ireland. Work must be done urgently to establish the cause of the rising costs. How can the Lord Chancellor talk of

"targeting legal aid towardes those people whose need is greatest"

when his Department has not even identified those who are in greatest need?

Indeed, these changes will hit some of the poorest and most vulnerable people in the community. Two groups among those who will suffer the most are women and children. It seems ironic that, in the immediate aftermath of major expenditure on the setting up of the Child Support Agency, the Government should now be implementing proposals which will tend to reduce the availability of legal advice to the very mothers whom the Child Support Agency was designed to help.

Similarly, the Children's Order (Northern Ireland) will create a need for significant advice and assistance by lawyers to parents. These new regulations seem deliberately designed to ensure that this desperate need is not met, at a time of great emotional stress and considerable financial worry for women and their children.

Such a study as Labour is urging would establish the savings that could be made in the ways in which legal services are provided. Then perhaps it would be possible to raise, not cut, eligibility levels. Unless such a review is undertaken, the very person that the whole scheme was constructed to help, the person of modest means with a legitimate case, will the greatest sufferer. The unhappy effect of all the Government's recent conduct of financial affairs has been that the person of modest means—wherever that person may be—has been the greatest sufferer.

10.34 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (Mr. John M. Taylor): It is important to set the debate in its context. Disciplines on public expenditure are necessary. Notwithstanding that fact, we are entitled to say that our legal aid system in this country—in using that expression, I rightly include Northern Ireland—remains the most generous in the world.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) asked, "Who are the most needy?" In Northern Ireland, civil legal aid is available to 65 per cent. of households or more. That means that two thirds of the community, all the way up from the most poor, remain eligible for civil legal aid. The arrangements for criminal legal aid are even more generous, a considerably larger section of the community being eligible without contribution.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North made the common vernacular mistake of referring to the alterations as cuts. They are not cuts. Spending on legal aid in Northern Ireland is destined to continue to rise, and legal aid is actually available to a larger proportion of citizens in Northern Ireland than in Britain.

It is important to be honest about these developments. The hon. Gentleman is correct to say—as I said in answer to his parliamentary question—that we assess that a decrease of about 2 per cent. in those eligible for legal aid

is to be expected. The hon. Gentleman referred to the Law Society both in this country and in Northern Ireland suggesting packages that could involve economies. Let me say on behalf of the Lord Chancellor that those suggestions were greatly appreciated, and the Lord Chancellor's Department is more than willing to continue to explore them. In fact, those items have been on the agenda of the efficiency commission since the mid to late 1980s. I must say that there has not been a very high degree of professional urgency in pressing them. We are more than happy to look at the profession's suggestions for economies that can be made—although I must tell the House that, as I have said on another occasion, their suggestions to date have proved on examination to be worth considerably less than claimed.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister of State would join me in paying tribute to the legal aid staff in Northern Ireland who have continued to do their administrative work, sometimes in the most appalling and, to my mind, quite frightening conditions.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North asked me to give certain undertakings, and I will certainly address the matters that he put to me. I cannot predict what spending options might become available in more prosperous future times—in the realms of legal aid or elsewhere in public expenditure—but I am quite sure that, in more prosperous times, there will be no shortage of competition for the resources that are then available.

The hon. Gentleman asked me to comment upon the fact that the Lord Chancellor has indicated that there may well be two further disciplines to be anticipated in legal aid in Northern Ireland. I am sure that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would wish me to say that these matters can in no way be delivered by an Executive act. They can be made available on a recommendation of the Executive, but it is Parliament that will decide—Parliament is the correct and ultimate forum for consulting the representatives of the people. The hon. Gentleman may be assured that that proper parliamentary route will be the only route down which any further changes can proceed.

The regulations which are the subject of this debate and which came into operation on 12 April 1993, have had the effects of decreasing the disposable income limit below which legal aid is available without payment of a contribution; increasing from one quarter to one third the fraction of disposable income which is payable as a contribution towards the cost of legal aid; decreasing the disposable income limit below which legal aid advice and assistance is available without contribution; aligning the allowances taken into account when computing disposable income in assessing eligibility for legal advice and assistance and for legal aid with those applicable for income support; increasing the sliding scale of the amount of capital to be disregarded in respect of persons of pensionable age; increasing the disposable income level below which legal advice and assistance is available; extending the disregard of certain forms of welfare benefit in the assessment of financial eligibility for legal advice and assistance and substituting a new scale of contributions payable by recipients of legal advice and assistance.

The regulations do not affect criminal legal aid in Northern Ireland and are concerned with civil legal aid, legal advice and assistance by way of representation. Having explained the main effects of the regulations, it will be helpful to the House if I explain why the Government have taken these measures at this time. The House will be aware that the financial criteria determining eligibility for civil legal aid, for advice and assistance—commonly referred to as the green form scheme—and for assistance by way of representation—often referred to as ABWOR—in Northern Ireland, have historically been the same as those applied in England and Wales.

Over a considerable number of years, eligibility changes introduced in England and Wales have been effected simultaneously in Northern Ireland. As in England and Wales, the cost to the public purse of civil legal aid in Northern Ireland has been escalating over the last few years and the Lord Chancellor was satisfied that the policy of applying similar financial criteria in the two jurisdictions should be continued on this occasion to control the acceleration of growth.

The need for these measures is illustrated by the fact that over the past four years, overall expenditure on civil legal aid and advice in Northern Ireland has more than doubled from £5·1 million to £10·3 million. In the three years from 1988-89 to 1991-92, the number of civil legal aid and advice and assistance bills paid increased by 22 per cent. while the cost of these bills increased by 63 per cent.

The Government are satisfied that such a rate of increase in the expenditure of taxpayers money cannot be allowed to continue. The regulations, the detailed effects of which I have already outlined to the House, will help to contain this growth in expenditure. But in so doing, the regulations have been designed to safeguard access to justice to the greatest possible extent and will direct available funding to where it is needed most. I stress that rather than being cut, expenditure on the legal aid scheme will continue to rise.

By the admission of a Labour spokesman in the House of Lords relatively recently, our system of legal aid is the most generous in the world. It is also probably one of the most expensive, if not the most expensive, and the taxpayer has an interest in the matter.

11.42 pm

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Like the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), I am not entirely satisfied that the Lord Chancellor's Department is absolutely correct to say that there will be only a very small reduction in the number of households affected by the economies. I doubt very much whether the reduction will be as low as 2 per cent. of expenditure overall.

With regard to the inevitable means-testing of applications for legal aid, I am not certain whether the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North is correct to say that people on low incomes will be hurt most. There are reasons to believe that people in the so-called middle-class bracket will suffer most. In many cases, middle income groups will find that legal aid actions will be priced out of their reach.

Oddly enough, the middle income group tends to be legitimately involved in seeking redress for grievances and in various civil actions. We must be very careful to ensure that those people are not being unduly deprived of resources. Could the Minister explain what he said about the vast and dramatic increase in the legal aid budget for Northern Ireland? Is it possible for him to give some categories that might show why there has been a mushrooming in the budget? He mentioned that there was the straightforward funding of legal action and legal aid

[Mr. James Molyneaux]

for representation. In Northern Ireland, legal aid for representation is especially important because I understand that he had third-party representations in legal cases in mind.

Thought needs to be given to a separate matter which may not be strictly relevant in the context of these orders —the impact on law centres and advice agencies. I know that that matter was considered at great length in the United Kingdom Legal Aid Act 1988. I wonder whether it is permissible to refer to that in the context of the present debate. I support the Labour party case that there should be a commonality and relationship—proportionately, if one likes—between expenditure in Great Britain and that in Northern Ireland. It is not enough for the Minister to say that the number of households will be limited. Certainly, it is no case for awarding Northern Ireland a budget that is smaller per capita than that for Great Britain. If it is the case that there is a variation and Northern Ireland is on a lower scale than the rest of the United Kingdom, that cannot be defended in any way.

I am sure that we are all searching for economies and want to ensure that moneys are spent wisely. Can we examine the possibility of effecting economies by omitting legal aid for cases that border on the frivolous on many occasions? In some cases, the cost of legal aid for preliminary hearings can be almost out of reach and has the habit of multiplying vastly when cases are taken to higher courts on appeal.

10.46 pm

Mr. John M. Taylor: With the leave of the House, I feel that the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) is entitled to a response. If there are any matters that I cannot address comprehensively because of the lateness of the hour, he and I can exchange letters because I am anxious to be obliging. He dwelt on the question whether we could enlarge on why the legal aid bill had gone up so much. That has been a source of puzzlement in the Lord Chancellor's Department.

One is driven to a conclusion which may require further investigation, but the fact is—I do not say this whimsically but in a straight manner—that the legal aid bill has gone up because lawyers' bills have been escalating faster than any known relevant attendant index. Certainly, volume has increased a little, but lawyers' bills have gone up much more than volume. One must look at the unit costs of the practitioner. Why are cases taking longer? I am tempted to say—with some humility—that, since the lawyers drafted the bills in the first place, perhaps they can help us by explaining why their bills have gone up. I would be interested to hear their explanation.

I have always tried to be sensitive to the interests of Northern Ireland and its representatives in the House. I give a pledge—I was not asked for this—that I will continue to examine closely any representation that comes from Northern Ireland and its hon. and right hon. representatives in the House. I end as I began: this is probably the most generous system of legal aid in the world. However, it is expensive and we must exercise some discipline from time to time.

10.49 pm

Mr. McNamara: By the leave of the House, I shall make just two observations. The first is in reply to what the leader of the Ulster Unionists said about the measure affecting many people. By modest means I referred to the salary and wage levels in Northern Ireland in comparison with the rest of the United Kingdom. But the effect of the increases could be across the board.

My second observation is that if we are punishing the litigant for the sins of the profession, the Government should have examined that in any case, in their auditing and control of payment of moneys. It seems wrong that the ordinary citizen should suffer because of what the Minister suggests is some fault on the part of the legal profession. That, above all, is the reason why we should vote against the regulations tonight.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 56, Noes 129.

Division No. 290] **[10.50 pm**

AYES

Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Battle, John
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Boyce, Jimmy
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Coffey, Ann
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Etherington, Bill
Fatchett, Derek
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Hanson, David
Hendron, Dr Joe
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hume, John
Illsley, Eric
Jowell, Tessa
Kirkwood, Archy
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Paisley, Rev Ian
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Rendel, David
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Skinner, Dennis
Spellar, John
Stott, Roger
Wallace, James
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr. Andrew Mackinlay.

NOES

Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Bates, Michael
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Fabricant, Michael
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil

Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Horam, John
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Richards, Rod
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Andrew Mitchell and
Mr. Michael Brown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Killingbeck Hospital, Leeds

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

11 pm

Mr. George Mudie (Leeds, East): I am grateful for the opportunity to draw the attention of the Under-Secretary of State for Health to matters relating to the proposed centralisation at the Leeds general infirmary of the cardio-thoracic facilities of Killingbeck hospital and the subsequent disposal of that hospital site. Although I shall also touch on the parallel proposal to centralise the neurosurgical work currently undertaken at Pinderfields hospital in Wakefield, my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), will seek to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to deal with that in greater detail.

I wish to draw a number of matters to the attention of the Minister and, in particular, to ask him to intervene. I must underline the widespread unhappiness felt in Leeds and the surrounding areas about the proposals to relocate the excellent work carried out at Killingbeck hospital at Leeds general infirmary. That hospital has been long established and is secure in the affection of the Leeds people. Excellent work is carried out in its cardio-thoracic and respiratory units by their completely dedicated staff.

More than 900,000 heart operations are carried out at the hospital, and some involve tremendous work on children. The hospital's reputation is worldwide, it conducts first-class research and could continue to provide that superb service to the wider community for a fraction of the capital sum that has been expended so generously by the Government to the LGI.

Killingbeck's location is unique because it is surrounded by park land and has excellent road links with all of Yorkshire. It is a source of puzzlement to all in West Yorkshire that those benefits have been disregarded in the rush to centralise services in a city centre site, in a multi-storey block at that. Time and time again, lay and medical staff of the hospital stress the recuperative value of its surroundings.

It is of vital interest to consider the history of the closure proposals, which appeared in the 1980s, when a regional review was conducted. That review eventually led to a report, as yet unpublished, that suggested that the thoracic facilities of Killingbeck and the neurosurgical facilities of Pinderfields might be centralised at LGI.

The unpublished report was hotly disputed by the medical staff at Killingbeck hospital. It was not then a unanimous view and, until recently, the argument in favour of centralisation bringing patient benefits was severely challenged. However, it was and has always been accepted that more money had to be spent, and that both buildings, the LGI and Killingbeck, suffer from problems of age. There is a great difference between spending modest but sensible sums and the amount being advanced in respect of the LGI.

When, in 1989, the unpublished report suggested centralising the LGI services, the proposal was warmly welcomed by the LGI, as it meant securing much-needed capital investment in the aging hospital. The proposed centralisation gave the hospital a golden opportunity. The decision to go ahead with the proposal was taken in 1989, and work on a £4 million multi-storey car park started last year, as the Minister is aware.

[Mr. George Mudie]

However, as with most things in life, nothing stands still. The Pinderfields hospital's proposed move was put out to public consultation a year ago, met with unanimous opposition and was hurriedly withdrawn. The inevitable committee was established, and is still deliberating to this day. Killingbeck relocation and closure proposals were released for consultation 10 days ago, and are programmed to run for three months.

A decision taken in 1989, which committed more than £75 million of public money, has been overtaken by events. One major user—Pinderfields—has serious doubts, and the second user is in the early stages of consultation and the opposition is just as fierce. Some issues relating to the credibility of the consultation need airing and answering.

There is deep disquiet in Leeds over the status of the consultation. First, why is the Minister allowing the LGI to go ahead with a £70 million new block, built with the stated aim of centralising both cardio-thoracic and neurosurgical work when, as I stand here in the Chamber, neither proposal has completed its consultation period?

Secondly, why is the Minister allowing a contract to be signed for the new building when it is clear that Pinderfields will not permit the neurosurgical work to come to Leeds? If the Minister replies that the work will come to Leeds even though the proposal faced total opposition, what validity does consultation have?

The third and most important reason for concern relates to the consultation and an open public debate on the value of centralising the services. How can the people of Leeds feel confident in the consultation process when, from 1 April this year, the LGI has been managing the Killingbeck site? Does the Minister know that, only days ago, the LGI reinstated a whistleblower, but only after strenuous efforts had been made by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett)?

That behaviour is hardly the sign of a benevolent management. Does the Minister feel that, on the basis of such behaviour, staff will be inclined to participate in an open debate on the key medical aspects of the exercise? I believe that public airing of the medical arguments is impossible, as staff are only too well aware that their future careers rest with the LGI.

Fourthly, how can the people of Leeds have faith in the consultation process when, the day after the consultation paper was released, the *Yorkshire Evening Post* revealed secret plans prepared by Touche Ross at the instruction of a developer which disclosed details of a multi-million-pound development, including a private health centre, a luxury hotel and a shopping complex on the Killingbeck site?

How can the public have confidence and feel that their views will be taken into account when a director of health care, a member of the consulting body, admitted last week in a radio programme that the health care body had already had discussions and—the impertinence of it—had even had disagreements over the proceeds from the sale of the Killingbeck site? Remember, that body has been issuing the consultation documents. How can the Minister defend the validity of the consultations when a consultant at Killingbeck hospital was quoted by *The Yorkshire Evening Post* as saying:

"Public consultation will be nothing more than a cosmetic exercise"?

I am anxious that the Minister appreciates that four years ago, a decision was taken and was challenged at the time. That decision, depending on one's standpoint, had a certain validity. It involved centralised neurosurgery and cardio-thoracics at the LGI at a cost, for the first phase, of about £75 million. The Ministry accepted the plan and pencilled in the money. Today, four years later, half the plan has unravelled, because public hostility has been dropped and towards the other half the same level of public hostility exists or, at least, is uncommitted.

Where does that leave the Minister? If he does not think it interesting enough to have a closer look, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury should. I appeal to the Minister to take time to consider the background. The new development will produce only 20 cardio-thoracic beds and no additional operating facilities. Is that worth £70 million? I suggest he takes another look at the plan.

To give him time to undertake that review and to give the consultations the credibility that they sadly lack, I urge him to instruct the LGI not to sign a commitment to the contract on the new building. The LGI knows the implications of the review, and fears it. Two hours before I rose to speak tonight, I was approached by a senior member of the LGI and urged not to suggest that in this Chamber. The LGI knows that it is in a building programme under false pretences. While I understand its need, I shall not be party—and I hope the Minister will not be party—to it getting a refurbished hospital at the cost of Pinderfields and Killingbeck hospitals.

If the Minister gives himself the necessary breathing space, he will find the facts to be as I have outlined them. He may find that there are other, and cheaper, ways of delivering the stated objectives. He may find the other Leeds hospitals indulging in some fresh thinking. He will end up achieving a victory over medical politics and empire-building. He will certainly gain the eternal gratitude of the people of Leeds.

11.12 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Mudie) on having raised on the Adjournment the significant and important issue of the future of Killingbeck hospital. As he explained, because of empire-building at Leeds general infirmary, services at Pinderfields are in danger. Indeed, the whole future of Pinderfields is in doubt.

The neurosurgical department at Pinderfields is among the most efficient in the Yorkshire region. There are at present only three such facilities—in Hull, at Pinderfields and in the LGI. If the programme set a few months ago is allowed to proceed, the neurosurgical department at Pinderfields could be lost.

Tremendous opposition was expressed when a consultative document was issued. So highly valued are the Pinderfields services by communities some distance from the hospital that the document was withdrawn. One reason for that was that it had not been costed. So when people started asking questions about cost comparisons, no answers were forthcoming from the regional health office, and the document had to be withdrawn.

Because of the stupidity of the regional health authority, a group of people were brought together to analyse the objections put to the original consultation exercise. The resulting committee is due to report back in the near future. The committee refused to meet the

chairman of the Wakefield community health council to hear the views of that council on the neurosurgical department at Pinderfields. Now we await the report.

I ask the Minister to insist on further consultations arising out of the complaints submitted for the first consultation document. Failing that, I join my hon. Friend in saying that there has been maladministration here. If it had taken place in local government, these people would have been charged with maladministration. As it is, they may be in this case. Anyway, there must be more consultations after the report by the review committee. I ask the Minister to afford that opportunity to the people who use the neurosurgical department at Pinderfields.

If the department is withdrawn from Pinderfields, the young disabled unit which forms part of it will be in danger. It is the only unit of its kind in West Yorkshire. It would be quite wrong to let such a facility disappear. Since 1 April this year, when community care was introduced, there has been a greater need for such a unit in the neurosurgical department to afford respite care for those with neurosurgical problems.

From the point of view of communications, nowhere is better placed than Pinderfields. From the M1 or the M62, people can be transported to the hospital buildings within minutes. The helicopter pad is first-class. If there are any better facilities in West Yorkshire, I would like the Minister to tell us about them. The car parking at Pinderfields is first-rate too. Only a few weeks ago I went to St. James's, where parking is, to say the least, traumatic. No such problem exists at Pinderfields.

There is a great deal to be said for maintaining the neurosurgical department at Pinderfields, and I ask the Minister to consider what I have said.

11.18 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): I have almost lost my voice, but I shall attempt to muddle through.

I was glad to hear the hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Mudie), who has initiated a debate on a number of important topics. I am pleased to see his colleagues in their places, and to see my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope), who takes a strong interest in this matter.

The hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) have made some serious allegations against local management, and have repeatedly questioned their motives and competence. Let me give my version of the history of the proposals.

Cardio-thoracic services are currently provided at two sites in Leeds, Killingbeck and the LGI. In 1988, the regional health authority commissioned a review of cardio-thoracic services and associated cardiology from the York health economics consortium. The review concluded that cardio-thoracic services should be concentrated on two sites—one unit in East and the other in West Yorkshire. There was a wide-ranging discussion on the outcome of the review, involving consultant surgeons, cardiologists and health authorities in the region.

In early 1990, St. James's, the LGI and Seacroft were invited to submit proposals for a new West Yorkshire cardio-thoracic unit to be developed on their sites. Following an option appraisal of all three bids, it was proposed to centralise cardio-thoracic services for West Yorkshire at new facilities to be built at the LGI.

As a consequence, the regional health authority examined ways in which the facilities at the LGI could be improved. As the cardio-thoracic facilities in both Killingbeck and the LGI are housed in fairly elderly buildings, it was recognised that they would have to be replaced at some point. Killingbeck is about 90 years old, and a recent survey of the estate estimated that a substantial sum needed to be spent on bringing it up to scratch. This led to a proposal to construct a purpose-built cardio-thoracic unit as part of the first phase of the redevelopment at the LGI. The proposals for that phase —to redevelop the site and provide modern facilities and better patient care, at a cost of some £72 million—were approved by my Department in July 1992.

That approval is an approval in principle, for a very good reason. It is an approval of the principle of a capital development, and is given only after careful consideration. It does not carry with it approval of any consequential changes that may require consultation. The approval was not conditional on the closure of Killingbeck hospital, and there has never been any question that Leeds Healthcare, or anyone else, can move cardio-thoracic services from Killingbeck to the LGI without full public consultation. The business case for the redevelopment of the LGI is not dependent on the centralisation of these services.

As the hon. Member for Leeds, East pointed out, Killingbeck is now a directly managed unit, and is part of the district health authority, Leeds Healthcare. So that Leeds Healthcare could carry out its primary function of commissioning the best possible care for the people of Leeds, it asked the LGI to manage Killingbeck on an agency basis. The LGI is responsible to the district health authority for the day-to-day running of Killingbeck; it has no power to make major changes or to sell assets. There is no secret back-door merger. The staff at Killingbeck are, of course, still employed by Leeds Healthcare, and have been kept informed about the changes and the reasons for them.

Following the various proposals to centralise cardio-thoracic services, the next stage was for Leeds Healthcare itself carefully to examine the proposals for the location of the centre. It is for purchasers to decide what health care is needed, and how it should be provided. The aim of Leeds Healthcare, as the lead purchaser, is to secure the best possible patient care—within available resources—for the people of Leeds and West Yorkshire.

Naturally, the views of clinicians and other staff at the LGI and Killingbeck were taken into account when the proposals were put together. The outcome of the discussions was the consultation document that has recently been circulated to a large number of medical bodies, to Members of Parliament and to health and local authorities, voluntary groups and trusts, as well as to the media. The purpose of the document is to invite public discussion of the proposals, and to invite organisations and members of the public to write in with their comments.

There may be some surprise at the fact that Leeds Healthcare is consulting so early on proposals that could not take place before 1996. However, purchasers in supporting the Leeds general infirmary development have to consider what impact the development would have on their requirements for Killingbeck's services. For its part, the LGI needs to know that purchaser's support can be

[Mr. Tom Sackville]

translated into action. That could not happen if, as a result of consultation, purchasers were prevented from moving services from Killingbeck. It is also important that patients and staff know where they stand and that uncertainty is ended. All that indicated an early consultation exercise.

At the end of the consultation period, Leeds Healthcare will consider the proposal in the light of the responses made during the consultation period. That will be not a rubber stamp but a serious re-examination of the proposals. Health authorities are well aware that proposals referred to Ministers are scrutinised very closely and no health authority worth its salt will want a reputation among Ministers as an author of half-baked schemes. However, if the proposals were opposed by the local community health council—we must not assume that it will disagree—and the health authority still wished to proceed, the case would be referred to the regional health authority. If the RHA wished to proceed, the matter would automatically come before Ministers.

Neither I nor my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State have considered the merits of these proposals. However, I can assure the hon. Gentleman that, when Ministers receive proposals from any health authority to close any hospital, they do not go through on the nod. Before we take any decision, we want to be sure that the correct consultation procedures have been followed. We will take into account what other services are available, and we will listen to the views of staff, who have been instrumental in giving cardio-thoracic surgery and cardiology the reputation that they have in Leeds. The most important criterion on which the proposals will be judged is that they are in the best interests of patients. We all want to be sure that the proposals will provide the best clinical care with the available resources.

I have listened carefully to the points made by the hon. Members for Leeds, East and for Normanton, and I understand the strong feelings that these proposals awake in local people. I have heard the hon. Member for Leeds, East express doubts about the validity of the new development and on consultation, on which I should like particularly to reassure him.

Mr. William O'Brien: Obviously, the Minister does not have information on the question that I asked about neurosurgery. However, will he ensure that there will be further consultation on the report that will be submitted to the regional health authority from the group set up to examine the responses of those who objected to the earlier consultation document, which was withdrawn because it has not been costed?

Mr. Sackville: I can say only that all representations will be fully considered. As a result of this debate, I am fully aware of the strength of feeling that exists about both proposals—*[Interruption.]* As I have said, all representations will be fully considered. No action will be taken unless Ministers are satisfied that it is in the full interests of the people of Leeds and West Yorkshire.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-eight minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 9 June 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Family Life

1. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what research his Department has undertaken into family life and Sunday church attendance in Scotland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): The Scottish Office has sponsored a number of research projects which touch upon various aspects of family life in Scotland. Full details are given in the 1992-93 edition of the Scottish Office Register of Research, a copy of which is in the House Library.

It is not for the Scottish Office to undertake research into church attendance.

Mr. Fabricant: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's answer. Is he aware that other research has shown that more people regularly worship in Scotland on Sundays than in England and Wales? Is he aware also that Scotland is unique in the United Kingdom, in that people are able to shop legally on Sundays in Scotland? Does my hon. Friend agree that England and Wales have a lot to learn from Scotland and that shops in England and Wales should be allowed to trade on Sunday, too?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Both countries have a lot to learn from each other. Scotland is, as my hon. Friend suggested, a God-fearing nation. The situation in Scotland works very well, in large measure because Sunday opening has evolved in accordance with the wishes of the majority of residents. No doubt my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, who is responsible for such matters, will take those points into account when he reviews the position in England.

Mr. Norman Hogg: Does the Minister agree that, notwithstanding what the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) said, and notwithstanding the position of the Scottish Office, church attendance in Scotland could stand improvement? It was said in *The Scotsman* on Tuesday that I criticise the Church of Scotland, which of course is correct, as it was I who wrote that in the first place. Does the Minister agree further that Sunday trading in Scotland, as in England, is a matter for the people concerned, that it is no business of ours how people trade in England on a Sunday, but that most Scottish people support the Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell)?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's comments. A substantial number of people support both the Church of Scotland—the national church—and the Roman Catholic Church. There are more than 752,000 names on the Church of Scotland congregational roll and more than 745,000 on the Roman Catholic Church roll. That is the reality, and we would do well to keep it in mind.

Mr. McFall: Thirty-one per cent. of the Scottish population attend church. That is twice the number of Scots who support the Government's current policies. If we look at the Government's record on the family, we clearly see that "suffer the little children to come unto me" is not a motto which guides their actions. There are 800,000 people in Scotland on income support—that is one sixth of the population—and half of them are likely to be children living on the margins of society.

What future do those impoverished children face? No doubt, they will join the 8,700 16 and 17-year-olds who have been rendered destitute by the Government's failure and by their youth training scheme. [HON. MEMBERS: "Question."] Instead of condemning the Church, will the Government join the side of the Church? Unlike the Samaritan, they walk on the other side of the road. Is it not ridiculous for the Government to take that action?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am glad to reassure the hon. Gentleman that nearly £80 billion is spent on social services throughout the United Kingdom, which is an enormous sum. The hon. Gentleman will be reassured to know that we are undertaking research into vital sectors which can be of assistance in Scotland. They include the impact of the Child Support Act 1991 on civil law and strategies for integrated local authority child care. We will continue in that process.

Industry and Employment

2. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of chambers of commerce to discuss industrial and employment trends in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): My ministerial colleagues and I have frequent opportunities to discuss a range of industrial and employment issues with representatives of chambers of commerce and other organisations. I visited Aberdeen chamber last December and Glasgow chamber in February, and I attended the first annual dinner of the Scottish chambers of commerce in Edinburgh at the end of April.

Mr. Salmond: The Secretary of State will know that Aberdeen chamber of commerce, among many other organisations, is concerned about the impact of the oil tax changes that were announced in the Budget. The best estimates are that it could cost 10,000 jobs in the north-east of Scotland. Is it possible to have a straight answer to a straight question from the Secretary of State on this issue? Treasury Ministers have told the House that other Departments were consulted before the tax changes in the Budget. Was the Scottish Office consulted, and if not, why not?

Mr. Lang: Consultations on all kinds of aspects of the Budget take place with a number of Departments. As the hon. Gentleman knows, internal consultations within

Government are never disclosed. What is clear from the changes proposed to the petroleum revenue tax is that some companies will benefit and some will suffer. What is also clear is that, in the longer term, there is every prospect of improved after-tax cash flow to companies as a result of the reduction in petroleum revenue tax.

I have no doubt that the great success story of offshore exploration, reinforced by re-siting Department of Trade and Industry engineering and exploration jobs in Aberdeen, and reinforced again by the welcome announcement by Conoco only last week of the relocation of 200 jobs to Aberdeen, will continue.

Mr. Kynoch: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the percentage of the working population in Scotland in employment is one of the highest in the European Community, way ahead of that of Germany, France, Italy and Spain? That is most encouraging news, which we never hear from the doom and gloom mongers opposite.

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Only two countries in the European Community have a higher percentage of their population in employment. The encouraging statistics in the north-east of Scotland, where my hon. Friend's constituency is located, reinforce the encouraging prospects we face throughout the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Adams: The Secretary of State will recall that I have visited his Department on several occasions regarding the industrial devastation that has been wrought on my constituency. The latest casualty is Babcock in Renfrew, where we are to suffer yet another large redundancy, probably of 450 people. That is on top of 500 last month at Rolls-Royce. Along with my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster), I have continually asked for an initiative in Renfrew district to tackle the industrial problems we face. The Secretary of State has continually refused that. Will he now reconsider the matter?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Lady is being extremely unfair. There have been a number of initiatives in Renfrewshire over the past few years. The establishment of the Renfrewshire enterprise company is a major new initiative to encourage the regeneration of the economy of that area. The hon. Lady should draw comfort from the Scottish Chambers' survey which shows optimism up in almost every quarter and in almost every sector of the economy in Scotland.

Mr. Wallace: In his discussion with chambers of commerce, has the right hon. Gentleman had representations on the importance of maintaining the dockyard at Rosyth, not only in terms of jobs in Fife, but in terms of jobs throughout the Scottish economy? Those jobs include more than half the engineering apprenticeships in Scotland. Given that his predecessor, Lord Younger, has said that if the contract for the refitting of the nuclear submarines goes to Devonport, it will be an unacceptable breach of faith, is the right hon. Gentleman prepared to put his job on the line for the jobs of thousands of Scots?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman knows very well where I stand on that issue. I am sure that he is well aware of my involvement in the consideration of these issues within Government. However, as the matter is not yet resolved and not yet decided, I cannot say any more in detail about it today, except to underline to the hon. Gentleman and to the House that I shall lose no opportunity to ensure that every argument in favour of Rosyth is advanced.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Does the Secretary of State accept that that was a miserable reply, as the future of Rosyth is one of the most serious issues that Scotland has faced since the war, and certainly since Ravenscraig? Is he prepared to see 18,000 jobs lost? Is he prepared to see the merchant shipbuilding industry largely lost, along with an important dockyard? Will he, in addition to the right hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) who has some say in this matter, get off his backside and make it clear to the Prime Minister that if Rosyth closes, the Secretary of State is willing to go as well?

Mr. Lang: Clearly, the hon. Gentleman did not listen to my previous answer or to the announcement made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence some weeks ago. He made it clear that there would be two yards regardless of where the Trident refit contract was placed. The Opposition would carry more conviction on this issue if they had not systematically campaigned against our nuclear submarine and had not systematically campaigned for the cancellation of the last Trident submarine. They therefore carry no conviction on the issue whatever.

NHS Staff

3. **Mr. Gallie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many additional nurses and doctors have been employed in the NHS since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): At 30 September 1992, there were 11,192 more qualified nurses employed in the national health service in Scotland than there were on 30 September 1979. The number of doctors, including general medical practitioners, increased by 1,448 over the same period.

Mr. Gallie: When there are more doctors and more nurses, whose pay has risen by more than 40 per cent. in recent times, when nurses and junior doctors have shorter working hours, and when there are new hospitals and new clinics, why do Opposition Members always tell us that the morale of staff in the health service is at a low ebb?

Mr. Stewart: As always, my hon. Friend is entirely right to say that, on this issue, as on other Scottish issues, Opposition Members are in the disinformation business. In real terms, NHS expenditure has increased by 45 per cent. since 1979-80, and on every indicator, the provision of services by the NHS in Scotland has improved steadily under this Government.

Mr. Canavan: Is the Minister aware of the concern among nurses and patients at Falkirk royal infirmary about the current threat to the hospital's urology department, and the general tendency of the Forth Valley health board gradually to run down the Falkirk royal infirmary and centralise everything at Stirling? Will the Minister intervene to ensure that that trend ceases and Falkirk royal infirmary can provide the full range of services that the people of Falkirk district need and deserve?

Mr. Sewart: The hon. Gentleman will recognise that those are decisions for the health board. However, I can reassure the hon. Gentleman by saying that the resources made available to Forth Valley of £139·6 million for the current financial year represent an increase of 3·3 per cent. over the 1992-93 base purchaser allocation. That is a sign of the resources available, but detailed decisions must be for the health board to make.

Mr. Dickens: Does my hon. Friend recognise that the excellence of the health service in Scotland and elsewhere is such that people now, God willing, enjoy a much longer life? Is that not vividly illustrated by the fact that, in her first year on the throne Her Majesty the Queen sent 210 telegrams to 100-year-olds, and that last year she sent 2,800 congratulatory telegrams—[HON. MEMBERS: "All to Scotland?"] No, not all to Scotland. Does that not illustrate the merits of the national health service during the past 14 years under Conservative Governments?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is correct to say that more and more Scots are living longer and longer. My hon. Friend has given the House a useful indicator, and all other signs point in the same direction. Under this Government, the number of in-patients treated per annum has increased by 27 per cent. and day patients by 180 per cent. Every figure underlines the effectiveness of this Government's commitment to the national health service in Scotland.

Mr. Wray: Does the Minister agree that the health service is the most caring and compassionate profession? It is the profession's duty to protect the sanctity of human life, and a shiver has been sent through the old, the hospice movement and the disabled by the Bill on euthanasia. Will the Minister oppose it with all his might, and will the Government oppose it?

Mr. Stewart: All hon. Members will take their own decisions on that Bill in the light of their own consciences. Speaking as an hon. Member, not a Minister, I have received a large number of representations from constituents and from those invoved in the hospice movement, and they accord with my personal view, which is one of opposition to the Bill.

Mrs. Fyfe: Will the Minister tell us this afternoon about the growth in the number of senior managers in the last year? His own statistics, published by the Scottish Office, show that the number has risen by no less than 30 per cent. in one year alone. How many nurses and midwives in training have we lost in the past 12 years; and how many beds have been lost in the past 12 years? More importantly, will the Minister state categorically what cuts he is contemplating for the health service when the Treasury comes looking for his share of the £50 billion deficit?

Mr. Stewart: There has been no increase in senior management numbers in the health service; there has merely been a redefinition of the number of positions previously allocated to staff groups but now separately identified.

As for the hon. Lady's general point about cuts, there have been been no cuts in the health service or in provision for the health service in Scotland. *[Laughter.]* The hon. Lady laughs. She is clearly incapable of reading the figures. *—[Interruption.]*—or of understanding them. How many more figures does she want? I can reassure her that provision for national health service spending in Scotland has increased not in nominal terms but in real terms by 45 per cent. since 1979-80. The Opposition simply cannot deny these basic facts.

Scottish Homes Tenants

4. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the choice of alternative landlords which is available for Scottish Homes tenants.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is for Scottish Homes, in consultation with its tenants, and within the scope of the guidance issued by my right hon. Friend, to make decisions on the choice of alternative landlords. Any proposals that secure the agreement of tenants are subject to his approval.

Mr. Home Robertson: Can the Minister think of a suitable name for a Government who legislate to allow tenants to choose new landlords but then refuse to allow the tenants to choose their preferred alternative landlord? Will he acknowledge the fact that three quarters of Scottish Homes' tenants in East Lothian have made it clear that they would prefer to choose East Lothian district council? Is he aware that that district council urgently needs more housing stock, and that the only obstacle to those tenants achieving their choice is a thrawn Tory in the Scottish Office who is not prepared to allow them what they want?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am aware that East Lothian has a growing population—a factor which we will take into account. The current arrangements do not prevent a local authority from proposing to acquire Scottish Homes stock. It will be for Scottish Homes to decide whether there are special circumstances that would enable the local authority to become a suitable landlord.

Scottish Homes has considered one local authority in this connection. Its tenants in Berwickshire were given the opportunity to vote to transfer to the local authority, but a majority voted against. As I say, if Scottish Homes judges that special circumstances arise, then the local authority will have this opportunity.

Mr. McAllion: Is the Minister aware that the Government's unrelenting hostility to public sector housing is creating a kind of housing apartheid in Scotland? Council housing is reduced to the status of a safety net for those who cannot afford anything else, and there is a real danger of creating in Scotland the sort of demoralised ghettos which have for so long scarred the American urban experience.

Why cannot the hon. Gentleman understand that the continued existence of tens of thousands of damp-ridden and decaying public sector houses is the responsibility of the Government; and that the situation will improve only when he and other Ministers get off their backsides and start to assist public sector housing in Scotland?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: About £1 billion is spent on public sector housing each year. When the hon. Gentleman speaks about ghettos, he should bear in mind the fact that huge sums have been poured into Whitfield in his constituency, which both he and I have visited. The scheme is strongly supported by his constituents. The

whole drift of our policy is to prevent what the hon. Gentleman suggests. I read a few days ago that the Labour candidate had a good chance of being re-elected against a Militant candidate because of the success of Conservative party policies.

Sir David Steel: The Minister's original answer is totally misleading. Does he not know that the number of tenants in Berwickshire that he referred to is six? We are not talking about special cases made to Scottish Homes but about the right of tenants generally to be able to choose either a private landlord or a local authority. Why cannot they be given that choice?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: They can be given that choice in special circumstances. I anticipate that Scottish Homes would examine such considerations as the number of properties involved, their location and the percentage of houses already held by the local authority. Obviously, in some areas the local authority may be virtually the monopoly provider of housing. Scottish Homes is justified in its approach. For operational, practical reasons it has decided that the ballot paper will contain two options—the status quo and a move to a specified landlord. The tenant's independent adviser should be able effectively to feed to Scottish Homes the tenants' views about who the preferred bidder should be.

"Scotland in the Union—a partnership for good"

5. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further steps he has taken to assess public opinion in Scotland on his White Paper "Scotland in the Union—a partnership for good".

Mr. Lang: The White Paper "Scotland in the Union —a partnership for good" has received a very positive response.

Mr. Galloway: The dogs in the street are laughing at that answer. As the Secretary of State surveys the sea of troubles in which his unrepresentative rump is floundering, does he ever gaze across the water to Barcelona, where the Catalan conservative party, Convergence in Union, is outstandingly successful notwithstanding its conservative free-market views? It is successful because it flies its free market colours as well as its Catalan colours and is not seen as a traitor to its own people.

Would not the Secretary of State be well advised to study that example and organise a democratic referendum in Scotland, in which all the options facing the Scottish people could be tested? He could do himself and his party a favour and respect the democratic rights of the Scots by organising a referendum on this risible White Paper.

Mr. Lang: In terms of unrepresentative rumps, I am not sure whether I can hold a candle to the hon. Gentleman, since he quite clearly disagrees with, and is disagreed with by, the rest of his parliamentary party. When I look for public opinion support in Scotland, I look at a recent by-election in Turriff, which was won by the Conservative candidate with an increase of 300 in his vote. He beat the Scottish National party into second place by 700 votes. That is an endorsement by public opinion in Scotland. The Labour party's membership throughout Scotland has fallen to 17,834. That is representative of very little.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that before any political party in Scotland can claim to speak for and, indeed, be representative of the Scottish people, it must first be representative throughout the length and breadth of Scotland? By its own admission, the Labour party, with only 17,000 members, may be many things, but it is not representative.

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It was quite clear from the result of the last general election that the policies espoused by the Labour party were not supported.

Dr. Reid: Have we not reached a pathetic and sorry pass when an English Tory, the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) could recognise in Question 1 the distinctiveness—indeed, he used the word "uniqueness"—of Scottish culture better than the Secretary of State for Scotland?

Is it not pathetic that our country is presided over by a Prime Minister who boasts that he does not read our national newspaper and by four Scottish Office Ministers who have no idea of our national aspirations? If they believe that they represent Scotland in any way, why will they not do what my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) asked, and organise a referendum to let the people of Scotland speak? That would be better than subjecting us to mealy-mouthed quotes.

Mr. Lang: It was my noble Friend Lady Thatcher who described a referendum as device to defeat democracy. I believe that the proposals in the White Paper will lead to the improvement of the handling of Scottish business here. I have written to the leaders of the other political parties and I am glad to say that the leader of the Scottish National Party has written back to me indicating that she is willing to take part in discussions on behalf of her party over the implementation of the proposals in the White Paper, "Scotland in the Union—a partnership for good."

Mr. Trimble: Does the Secretary of State intend to convene an all-party conference in Scotland on the White Paper? If he does not, does he appreciate the contrast between himself, who apparently does not want talks but has a policy, and his colleague the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, who wants talks but does not have a policy?

Mr. Lang: I do not propose to call the conference to which the hon. Gentleman refers, but I have indicated my willingness, indeed my enthusiasm, to discuss our proposals in detail with the leaders of the other political parties in Scotland. One of the distinctive features of the United Kingdom is the diversity of its component parts and one of the purposes of the White Paper is to accommodate that diversity as it is reflected in Scotland.

Mr. McLeish: Will the Secretary of State own up to the fact that public opinion in Scotland is of marginal interest to his beleaguered Administration? Does he not accept that only 16 per cent. of public opinion now supports the Conservative party, that 98 per cent. of public opinion overwhelmingly opposes the madcap idea of privatising water and that 80 per cent. of Scots want substantial constitutional change rather than Tory tinkering at Westminster? Surely the Secretary of State will accept that if public opinion is to triumph, he must mend his ways.

More importantly, if it is to triumph, he must show that he is listening, or are we to see in future Tory losses mounting in Scotland at the same rate as his losses in Lloyd's?

Mr. Lang: Public opinion polls are, of course, of interest to the Labour party as its popularity is shown rather highly in them from time to time. The hon. Gentleman will understand why I regard them with a certain detached approach, given their predictions before the last general election. The poll which matters in a democratic country such as ours is the general election poll. That is the poll which leads to the choice of a Government.

Water

6. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the cost of *(a)* the implementation of EC water directives over the next 15 years and *(b)* other water investment over the same period.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Sir Hector Monro): The capital costs of meeting European Commission water and waste water directives and other investments is estimated at some £5 billion over the next 15 years divided equally between the two categories.

Mr. Chisholm: Does the Minister realise that the Scottish people are sick and tired of the figures he has given today being used as a cover for water privatisation? Does he not understand that people in my constituency do not want front door water privatisation or back door water privatisation, whether by franchising or competitive tendering? Why cannot water investment be paid for by public borrowing? Why on earth should that mean cuts in other public expenditure, as Ministers have claimed? If the Secretary of State has difficulty in persuading his Cabinet colleagues, why does he not remind them that the figure of £5 billion over 15 years announced by the Minister today was exactly the same as the water debt written off at one stroke by his Government in 1989 as sweetener to the newly privatised English water industry?

Sir Hector Monro: It is rather sad that the hon. Gentleman never listens to Questions in the House and apparently never reads the answers. I have explained to him and his Opposition colleagues time and again that they have to be patient. Another few weeks will make all the difference. They will find out what policy we intend to introduce from the six, seven, eight, nine or 10 options before us. If he waits until then he may have quite a surprise.

Mr. Gallie: Is my hon. Friend aware that Opposition Members have consistently opposed standing charges in public services? Is he aware that Labour-controlled Strathclyde regional council has just imposed a standing charge on water services? Does he not think that that is shameful?

Sir Hector Monro: My hon. Friend is well aware of the situation in his constituency and in surrounding areas. Water costs are extremely high in Scotland and have increased year by year, particularly over the past three years. That must be carefully considered in deciding our future policy.

Mr. Kirkwood: Has the Minister considered allowing publicly controlled local water authorities access to private money markets in a way that does not count against the public sector borrowing requirement? That would solve at a stroke the problem to which he referred earlier of the need for capital investment without the ideological difficulties that will be created by privatisation. Earlier, the Minister said that we might get a surprise when the announcement is eventually made. That can only be interpreted as meaning that the Government are abandoning their privatisation plans.

Sir Hector Monro: The hon. Gentleman might be wrong again. If he is prepared to wait a few more weeks, he will find the answer to his concerns. His proposal is one of many that are being considered, and it has not been lost in the pile of results that have come in from all over Scotland.

Mr. Connarty: The Minister has been listening to the comments by some about the uniqueness of Scottish culture and morality. Will he go with that trend and give an assurance that we will not be surprised by the Government's abandoning the safeguard whereby in Scotland users cannot have their water supplies cut off —and that there will be no repeat of the terrible scenes in England and Wales, with rising dysentery and the loss of water supplies that are vital to people's lives? Will he give an assurance today that he will not abandon that basic tenet of Scottish morality and civil law?

Sir Hector Monro: Regional councils have many ways of getting people to pay their water bills. Until we have the legislation, the hon. Gentleman must be patient.

Mr. Welsh: As the need for investment on a much smaller scale was a major reason given by the Government for abandoning water privatisation in Northern Ireland, will the Minister similarly abandon plans for privatisation in Scotland, where it is not needed—or is it simply a case of double standards?

Sir Hector Monro: I thought that the hon. Gentleman's rebellious approach to water would have stopped him asking any more questions. Like the rest of his colleagues, he will have to wait to see.

General Practitioners (Drug Dispensing)

7. **Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from residents of Springside and Crosshouse on preservation of the system of general practitioners dispensing drugs to their patients; and what response he has made.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has not received any representations from residents of Springside and Crosshouse on the preservation of the system of general practitioners dispensing drugs to their patients.

Mr. Donohoe: That answer surprises me because the service that is on offer in Crosshouse is under severe threat. A chemist has decided to open for business, and that jeopardises a long-term solution that was in place, whereby Crosshouse general practitioners dispensed drugs themselves. Given that the Minister has heard nothing,

will he meet my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) and myself to discuss the matter?

Mr. Stewart: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I understand the situation. He is correct in saying that a Crosshouse pharmacist applied for and was granted a national health service dispensing contract. The health board received correspondence from Crosshouse and Springside residents and a petition from Crosshouse community association. The board's pharmacy practice committee was aware of that correspondence when it reached its decision. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the matter went to the national appeals panel on 27 April, when the pharmacist's application was upheld. It would not be sensible for my right hon. Friend to intervene, given that all the appropriate procedures were observed.

Mr. McKelvey: The point that the Minister is missing is that elected representatives have tried to intervene and we have been told by the council that we have no authority to act on behalf of our constituents—which I think is a damned cheek. More than 90 per cent. of the people in Crosshouse said that they were happy with the situation as it existed, but that was completely ignored by the committee and the appeals committee. What kind of patients charter is it when 90 per cent. of people are satisfied with the service but are overruled by a committee which takes no consideration whatsoever of their views?

Mr. Stewart: The point is that a pharmacist did apply for a NHS dispensing contract, which was granted. I think there are powerful general arguments for continuing the separation of prescribing and dispensing—where that is generally sensible—because where there is such a separation the person writing the prescription will not be in a position to gain financially depending on the choice of drugs prescribed.

Caledonian MacBrayne

8. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make a statement about the proposed review by the board of Caledonian MacBrayne at Gourock.

Mr. Lang: No review by the board of Caledonian MacBrayne has been proposed. However, the Government have decided to review options for the future organisation and structure of Caledonian MacBrayne, including the possible scope for introducing private sector participation in the provision of Caledonian MacBrayne's services.

Mr. Graham: Is the Secretary of State aware that, once again, he has created tremendous uncertainty in the Inverclyde area by the threat of privatisation and possible job losses? There is also a threat to the islanders, who have already stated that they expect privatisation to mean increases in fares, less frequent services and, at the end of the day, islanders once again being driven off the islands and back to the mainland. I know that the Secretary of State was born in Greenock. Another infamous character called Captain Kidd was also born there, and I must say that the Secretary of State will look like a pirate if he continues with this mad stupid policy to privatise any part of the Caledonian MacBrayne services.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman is unfair to Greenock; I was actually born in Glasgow. I hope that he shares my anxiety to remove any uncertainty and alarm among the people who use the Caledonian MacBrayne services. Caledonian MacBrayne provides services to the mainland and 23 islands, and we are committed to maintaining and advancing the economic and social conditions of the islanders. The question at issue is whether the present arrangements are the best way of fulfilling that commitment or can be improved on.

Mr. Macdonald: Will the Secretary of State give a commitment that the findings of the Halcrow Fox report in regard to the impact of ferry fares and ferry costs on island businesses will be published and not covered up? Does he recognise that islanders view the prospective privatisation of Caledonian MacBrayne as the poll tax at sea? The last thing that island businesses need at this time is a prolonged period of uncertainty about Caledonian MacBrayne's future.

Mr. Lang: The Halcrow Fox study has not yet been completed, let alone submitted to us. There is no question of its being buried away, as the hon. Gentleman implied, and not being taken into account. I know that the hon. Gentleman has tabled a written question, and that will be answered in due course. As to the islanders, I cannot believe that they hold the view of the Caledonian MacBrayne services that the hon. Gentleman describes. The revenue deficit subsidy stands at £7 million this year, and that represents some 18 per cent. of the company's total costs. We have substantially increased shipping subsidies—they now total over £17 million in Scotland as a whole—to ensure that the economic and social conditions of the islands are upheld and advanced.

Mrs. Ray Michie: Why is the Secretary of State returning to the matter? We went through it all in 1988, when it was made clear that the privatisation of Caledonian MacBrayne would lead to higher fares, increased freight costs, no cross-subsidies from profitable to unprofitable routes and no back-up vessels being available—all a body blow to the islanders. Will the Secretary of State tell the House how much this latest consultant review is to cost? Does he admit that he is in danger of being pushed around by a London-based Treasury, which does not give a tinker's damn about what happens to the islanders of Scotland?

Mr. Lang: I cannot at this stage tell the hon. Lady the cost of the survey, since we are still waiting for submissions from the various possible consultants who might be contracted to undertake it. Most of the 1988 review as concerned with the Clyde, whereas what we are reviewing at present is the Caldeonian MacBrayne services to all 23 islands that it serves and also P&O services to Orkney and Shetland, which are privately owned services subsidised by the taxpayer. It is because the cost of that subsidy and the support for both shipping lines have advanced so substantially that we want to make sure that we are using the most effective and efficient way of maintaining our commitment to uphold services to the islands.

Damp Housing

9. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he intends to take to measure and *reduce the health risk to children of living in damp public* sector housing.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In preparing their next housing plans and housing capital programmes, due by the end of August, all local housing authorities have been asked to set out strategies and targets for tackling housing in their areas that is subject to condensation and dampness.

Mr. Dunnachie: I thank the Minister for that somewhat idiotic reply. We have had many surveys of housing in Scotland and yet nothing has been done to alleviate the suffering of the people of Scotland from damp housing, the high mortality rates of children who live in damp housing, and the schooling of kids in Scotland which is affected. All this, and all we get from the Minister is the same rubbish every time: £900 million for the whole of Scotland's housing. It is a disgrace that the hon. Gentleman, a Scotsman, should stand there and tell me that. Why does he not stand up and fight for the people of Scotland?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The sum of £900 million is certainly not a disgrace. It is very substantial funding if it is properly applied. The hon. Member must realise that the targeting of resources where they are most needed is what is required. We have laid down condensation and dampness as one of the three strategic priorities that local authorities must put forward in their housing plans. The hon. Member must bear in mind that figures resulting from the preliminary findings of the national house conditions survey show that only 2 per cent. suffer from very severe problems of condensation and dampness, and that top priority should be given to resolving those problems as quickly as possible.

Edinburgh Royal Infirmary

10. **Dr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairman of the Lothian health board to discuss the plan for a major new teaching hospital to replace the Edinburgh royal infirmary.

Mr. Stewart: Officials of the Scottish Office Home and Health Department regularly discuss the provision of hospital services with Lothian health board and keep Ministers fully informed. Policy on the provision of acute hospitals in Edinburgh is primarily a matter for the board, subject to public consultation and the approval of my right hon. Friend.

Dr. Strang: But since it is two years since the Lothian health board decided to replace the Royal with a major new teaching hospital in the south of Edinburgh; since a site has already been acquired, why are the Government still not giving the go-ahead for investment? Is the Minister aware that we need not only a new hospital but a major new medical school? Will we get an early and positive decision on this or will the Government sabotage Edinburgh's reputation as an international centre of excellence for medical teaching and research?

Mr. Stewart: I do not agree with the hon. Member's analysis of the present situation. Perhaps I can put it in context for him. The board consulted widely on the delivery of acute services in Edinburgh, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind), then Secretary of State, endorsed the outline conclusions in autumn 1989, including the teaching hospital in the south-east of Edinburgh and the substantial rebuilding of Edinburgh Royal, as the hon. Gentleman has said. The board is currently and sensibly reviewing that strategy against the background, for example, of the dramatic changes being experienced in the delivery of patient care.

I cannot anticipate the outcome of the board's review. However, I can tell the hon. Member that I have no reason to believe that a new teaching hospital will not figure in any new proposals that will be put to Ministers.

Mr. Eric Clarke: I am very surprised at the Minister's answer because, in consultation with my colleagues and hon. Members representing the Lothian region, the hospital board told us that this hospital is a keystone because there will be only three major hospitals left—St. John's in Livingston, the Western general and this one that is not even built yet. The alternative is to close down about seven other hospitals, with the exception of the sick children's. If we know that, the Minister should know that. I would like to know when he will give the go-ahead for this particular hospital.

Mr. Stewart: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman did not hear exactly what I said, which was that I cannot anticipate the outcome of the review, but I have no reason to believe that a new teaching hospital will not figure in the new proposals. The revised strategy will require ministerial consent. That will be given only if we are satisfied that the proposed changes will lead to a better standard of care and will, therefore, be in the interests of patients. There will, of course, be an opportunity for public consultation when the proposals are known. The hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends are welcome to have full meetings with my right hon. Friend on the details.

Regional Assistance

11. **Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent discussions he has held with representatives of (a) Grampian regional council and (b) the European Commission on the details of potential allocation of objective 5(b) status to west Grampian.

Sir Hector Monro: The European Commission's proposals for the future operation of the structural funds are currently under discussion at official level in the Council of Ministers. Until negotiations on criteria for the selection of objective 5(b) areas are further advanced it would be premature to discuss the possible allocation of 5(b) status to west Grampian.

Mrs. Ewing: Does the Under-Secretary not understand that there is a cross-party, Grampian-wide campaign to ensure that structural funds are allocated to the rural areas, which are very fragile, given their dependency on the fishing and farming industries? Why, therefore, is the Under-Secretary not prepared to meet an all-party delegation of Members of Parliament, representatives of the regional council and representatives of the district councils? I accept that meetings do not always lead to agreement, but does the Under-Secretary not understand

that there is a desperate need for a meeting to take place very quickly, because decisions could be taken by the Commission as early as July?

Sir Hector Monro: I most certainly appreciate just how serious the situation is relative to west Moray, the north Moray coast and the fishing areas. I appreciate the strength of the case put forward by Grampian regional council and the local enterprise company. I can assure the hon. Lady that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is prepared to meet a delegation, which has already been suggested by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) and my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson). I am sure that my right hon. Friend will enjoy having the company of the hon. Lady as well.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: I am grateful to the Minister for saying that he will meet a delegation. I had understood, however, that he told the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) that he did not think that a meeting was timely. If that view has changed, I welcome it. Will the Minister take on board the fact that people who live outside Grampian often feel that it is a rich area? Although part of it is rich, the west Grampian part of it is very deprived. Income levels there are 75 per cent. of the European average and 71 per cent. of the United Kingdom average. Serious consideration, therefore, needs to be given to the allocation of 5(b) status to west Grampian.

Sir Hector Monro: Yes, I appreciate that the percentage of unemployment in west Moray, in the Forres area, is particularly high. My right hon. Friend is prepared to meet an all-party delegation and will look forward to doing so.

Mr. Robert Hughes: May we have the matter absolutely clear? I received a letter this morning from the Secretary of State in which he said that it was premature to have a meeting and that it might have to be delayed until later in the year. Is the Under-Secretary telling us that the Secretary of State has reconsidered and that a meeting is now on offer? If so, can that very small delegation include Members of Parliament from the region?

Sir Hector Monro: Yes. My right hon. Friend will do that.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Will the Minister explain, on behalf of the Secretary of State, why the people of Grampian, or anybody else, can have faith in the Government's influence upon European affairs? Has the Secretary of State for Scotland told the Under-Secretary how the Home Secretary achieved five extra seats in Europe, the Secretary of State for Wales one extra seat for Wales and the Secretary of State for Scotland none whatsoever for Scotland? In view of that, what advice does the Secretary of State for Scotland intend to give to the sycophantic Scottish Tory press so that it can present that as a success instead of a spectacular failure?

Sir Hector Monro: That was very much a last-minute gasp by the hon. Gentleman, and he knows that it is far removed from anything to do with objective 1 or objective 5(b).

Infertility Treatment

12. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to standardise the availability of infertility treatments through the NHS in health boards in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: All health boards in Scotland provide infertility services, the extent and level of which are—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I should be much obliged if the House would settle down.

Mr. Stewart *rose—[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must come to order.

Mr. Stewart: All health boards in Scotland provide infertility services, the extent and level of which are for boards to decide in the light of local needs and circumstances.

Mr. Watson: The Minister clearly is not aware that level 3 infertility treatment is available free of charge in Glasgow but costs £400 a time in Dundee and more than £1,000 a time in Edinburgh and Aberdeen—the only places in Scotland where such treatment is available on the national health service. A few minutes ago, the hon. Gentleman had the gall to say that Labour Members were guilty of spreading disinformation. That comes rich from a man whose Government have reneged on a pre-election commitment given by the Scottish Minister then responsible for health that such services would be provided centrally. If the Under-Secretary is not prepared to honour that pledge he will not only be accused of disinformation but will be guilty of colluding in what will be seen as a cheap and cruel vote-catching gimmick on thousands of childless couples in Scotland. Will he now give that commitment?

Mr. Stewart: Of course I am fully aware of the detailed provision of infertility services in Scotland—at level 1, which represent treatment offered by a GP or general gynaecologist, at level 2, which represent secondary or specialist care available at a district general hospital and are widely available on the NHS in Scotland and, as the hon. Gentleman pointed out, at level 3, with free in vitro fertilisation service at the Royal infirmary, Glasgow. Health boards must decide whether to provide or purchase those services from the resources allocated to them. That situation is not unique to Scotland; it applies throughout the United Kingdom.

Mr. Kynoch: Does my hon. Friend agree that in vitro fertilisation is a very complex and costly procedure and that the success rate of the four centres to which he referred is far from consistent? Will he join in welcoming Grampian health board's move to reinvestigate the funding of IVF treatment in its area so that my constituents can be treated at a more favourable cost within the Grampian health board area?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. He is right to give that example of a health board deciding to investigate what is sensible in the light of local needs and circumstances in its area.

Dr. Godman: Is not there a need for not only the regulation of treatments throughout Scotland but for the supervision of all treatments throughout health boards? The recent scandal of the Inverclyde royal hospital showed that stark fact. When will the committee of inquiry publish or present to the Minister its report on matters at the Inverclyde royal hospital, and is the Minister satisfied with the remedial action that was taken by the hospital to diminish and give comfort to the women who were caught up in that needless and dreadful scandal?

Mr. Stewart: The short answer to the hon. Gentleman's second question is yes, and I hope that he will be reassured by the meetings that he has been offered by my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State to discuss matters in detail. The answer to his first question is that there will be a full investigation under the inquiry conducted by Dr. McGoogan. The report will be made to the Secretary of State and the Minister of State and to the health boards. It will be made public. The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point, and the report will be completed as soon as is possible and practicable.

Skye Bridge

14. **Mr. Charles Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress of work in respect of the bridge to Skye.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The second caisson for the south pier of the main bridge is due to be placed on the sea bed this week. As with the first caisson, this marks a very important milestone in the construction of the bridge. The contractor is confident that the bridge will be completed on programme by mid-1995.

Mr. Kennedy: I welcome the fact that the Prime Minister and the former Chancellor recognise the importance of the Skye bridge and are here for this question. As the Minister is aware of the sense of blatant injustice felt in Skye and Lochalsh about the principle of a privately toll-funded bridge and high tolls being levied on locals for anything up to a generation, the related problems of Caledonian MacBrayne and the roll on/roll off service between Mallaig and Ardvasar, will he use the opportunity of the summer recess to accept the invitation that I have twice extended to him to meet the local people and hear what is being said about the massive economic and social implications that the structure, as presently constituted, will have?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I will meet the hon. Gentleman any time, but he must remember that the bridge will be of enormous benefit not only to his constituents but to the people of the Western Isles. As for the toll, he must remember that when traffic increases, this could reduce the toll or shorten the toll period. That is a factor which he and his constituents would be wise to bear in mind.

Personal Statement

Madam Speaker: We now have a personal statement. I remind the House that a resignation statement is heard in silence and without interruption.

3.31 pm

Mr. Norman Lamont (Kingston upon Thames): This is not an easy statement for me to make today, but I am sure that the House will understand that and that I can rely on the traditional tolerance and generosity of hon. Members.

To give up being Chancellor of the Exchequer in the circumstances in which I did is bound to be an uncomfortable experience, but I have also been a Treasury Minister for almost seven years, a longer continuous period than anyone else this century. Indeed, I have been the only person ever to have held the three offices of Financial Secretary, Chief Secretary and Chancellor of the Exchequer.

I should like to pay tribute to the officials with whom I worked all those years. In my opinion, they are equal to the best in the world, and I am astonished how, when things go wrong, often it is the civil servants who are blamed when it is we politicians who make the decisions and it is we politicians who should carry the blame.

When the Prime Minister told me two weeks ago that he wished to make changes in his Government, I of course told him that I appreciated that he had a very difficult task. He generously offered me another position in his Cabinet, but, in my opinion, it would not have been right either for him or for myself if I had accepted. If he wished to change his Chancellor, it was surely right that I should leave the Cabinet. Perhaps I can make it clear that I wish the Prime Minister well and hope that his changes will produce whatever advantage for him and the Government he intended.

It has not been easy being Chancellor of the Exchequer in this recession, continually and wrongly described as the longest and deepest since the war or, even more inaccurately, since the 1930s. It is certainly not the deepest recession since the war and, when the figures are finally revised, it may turn out not even to have been the longest. But it is a recession which has affected many areas which have not experienced such severe recession before; and that was bound to have an adverse effect on the fortunes and popularity of the Government.

This recession was not caused by Britain's membership of the exchange mechanism. The recession began before we joined the ERM—and, incidentally, before I became Chancellor—and a large part of the fall in output occurred in late 1990 and early 1991, far too soon to be influenced by our membership of the ERM. No, this recession has its origins in the boom of 1988 and 1989. That boom made the recession inevitable.

But the recession is now behind us, and so I am able with confidence to wish every success to my right hon. and learned Friend the new Chancellor. He inherits, I believe, a fundamentally strong position. As Mr. Lloyd Bentsen, the United States Treasury Secretary, said in a generous letter to me last week, Britain is the only European country likely to experience any significant growth this year; and inflation is at a 30-year low. Since the war only two Conservative Chancellors have been responsible for bringing inflation down to below 2 per cent. Both of them were sacked. In my view, that tells us a great deal about the difficulties of reducing inflation in a democracy as lively and disputatious as ours.

I am delighted to hear from the Prime Minister that policy will not alter. My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor will understand if I say that he thus comes to the Treasury at a most favourable time. Much of the hard work has been done and he should be able to enjoy increasingly encouraging trends for a long time to come. I am sure that my initiative in bringing the autumn statement and the Budget together into one December Budget is a reform that will last, and I wish my right hon. and learned Friend well with what is a massive task.

I have been privileged to present three Budgets. All three achieved the objectives that I set for them. The first drew the sting of the poll tax; the second, by introducing the 20p income tax band, helped us to win the election; the third, unpopular though it undoubtedly was, made a significant step towards reducing our budget deficit. That, as I have frequently observed, is the greatest threat to our long-term position.

Having put up some taxes, it is vital that the Government now turn their attention to public spending. Last year, I set up a new system for controlling public spending. I believe that it gives my right hon. and learned Friend the means to do what is necessary. I am sure that he has the will. We do not want more tax increases. We need tight control of public spending. My right hon. and learned Friend will have my full support if he is robust in tackling that problem.

I should now like to say a word about Britain's experience of membership of the exchange rate mechanism. Although many people are either for or against membership of a fixed exchange rate system, there are many others, including, for example, Alan Greenspan, the chairman of the United States Federal Reserve Board, whose views about fixed versus floating exchange rates have never been theological. My views are not theological either. I have always believed that one could run an economy on either a fixed or a floating rate basis, although at times one might be more appropriate than the other.

I tried to persuade my noble Friend Lord Lawson that it was not worth resigning over the ERM in 1988. Although I probably would not have joined in 1989, I did not believe then that a fixed-rate system was doomed to break up. Presumably those who hold that view blame my noble Friend Lady Thatcher for committing us to a policy that was bound to fail. But I do not take that view now, and I did not take it then. When I accepted the office of Chancellor, I accepted the policy, believed that it could be made to work, and did all that I could to make it work. It certainly enabled us to get inflation down dramatically. Indeed, without the ERM, I doubt whether the Government would have had the courage and determination to get inflation down; that is a point to which I shall return.

The reason why our policy on the ERM ultimately broke down was that German policy developed in a way which, in my view, was mistaken and which was not anticipated—not least when German interest rates were put up last year. As members of the ERM, we were forced to respond in a way that meant that our own policy became increasingly over-tight. I became increasingly concerned last summer that our policy was too restrictive and that our membership of the ERM was impeding recovery.

I raised with the Prime Minister the idea that we might suspend our membership temporarily at some future date if recovery were being prevented. He made it clear that he did not want to do that. Probably he was right. I accepted it. In any case, it would not have made any difference. We were talking about the distant future and we would have been overtaken by the same events in September that ultimately hit us. But I would not want the country to believe that these matters were never under consideration or that we were not aware of what was happening in the economy outside.

That perhaps explains why I did not do one thing that some have argued and urged might have enabled us to remain within the exchange rate mechanism—to put up interest rates in the summer of 1992. Because of the position of the domestic economy, I did not believe that that was an option. Furthermore, I did not believe that it would have been credible, and I am sure that I was right.

People have frequently asked me why we did not devalue within the system. I did not devalue because it would have meant higher interest rates at a time when we needed lower interest rates. One solution might have been a revaluation of the mark against all other currencies in the ERM, thus making room for lower German interest rates. I was not opposed to that, but, unfortunately, my friend and colleague, the late Pierre Beregovoy, the French Finance Minister was, despite my efforts at persuasion, implacably opposed to such a move.

I do not believe that any question of rejoining the ERM should remotely be on the agenda during this Parliament. Fortunately, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor has already announced his policy. I am only thankful that, despite the residual doubts of some of my colleagues, I insisted on getting my own way and on keeping the ERM out of Maastricht as a treaty obligation. I need hardly remind the House how difficult our position would be today if the Maastricht treaty obliged us to rejoin the ERM.

Some argue that the credibility of the Government was destroyed on 16 September. But once I had reconstructed our policy, that was not the view of the markets, or of the stock exchange, which touched an all-time high not so long ago, or of the foreign exchange markets, where the pound's recovery has been strong enough to worry some business men—nor was it supported by that crucial indicator, long bond yields, which are lower than for some time and lower today than in September.

Markets and business men are cynical. They know that, in a fixed exchange rate system, there are certain things that Finance Ministers have to say. Credibility and confidence depend not on words but on objective conditions. I am glad to say that those objective conditions today are better than they have been for many years.

On the crucial question of credibility, I want to take this opportunity to give my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor some advice. Nothing would be more effective in establishing the Government's credibility than if my right hon. Friend would have the courage to establish an independent central bank in this country. The time has come to make the Bank of England independent. It is my greatest regret that, after two and a half years of trying, I failed to persuade the Prime Minister of this essential reform.

Now that we are outside the ERM, the need is even more urgent. Britain is one of the few countries where monetary policy remains firmly in political hands, and the pressures on politicians to take policy decisions for political reasons can be quite irresistable. With an independent bank, we could have lower interest rates for a given exchange rate. Policy would be more credible and it would give us the necessary discipline for keeping inflation down on a permanent basis.

While my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I have been in general agreement on interest rate policy, I do not believe that even the timing of interest rate changes should ever be affected by political considerations. Interest rate changes should never be used to offset some unfavourable political event. To do so undermines the credibility of policy and the credibility of the Chancellor.

When my resignation was announced 10 days ago, the reaction of many was that it was a delayed resignation, a resignation that should have happened on 16 September. On that day, and during the subsequent days, I did of course consider my position carefully with friends and colleagues. I was anxious to do what was right for the country and for the Government. Sir Stafford Cripps, who is rightly regarded as an honourable man, did not resign after devaluing the pound. On the other hand, Lord Callaghan, also an honourable man, did.

There are three principal reasons why I decided to stay in office. First, the events of last September were very different from those of 1967. They affected not just this country, but most of Europe. The Finance Ministers of no fewer than nine countries were forced to eat their words and either devalue or float. Five floated; four devalued; one both devalued and floated. In none did the Finance Minister resign or, to the best of my knowledge, come under any pressure to resign. Indeed, in one country the governor of the central bank was actually promoted: he became Prime Minister.

Secondly, membership of the exchange rate mechanism was the policy of the whole Government; and as the Prime Minister said, I was implementing Government policy. Our entry was not a decision in which I myself played any part. It was, however, a decision made after a whole decade of fierce public and private argument—a decision made by the previous Prime Minister, the present Prime Minister and the present Foreign Secretary.

Thirdly, I did not resign because that was not what the Prime Minister wanted. When the Prime Minister reappointed me after the general election, I told him two things: first, that I did not wish to remain Chancellor for very long; and, secondly, that he did not owe me any debt or any obligation. On 16 September he made it clear to me in writing that he had no intention of resigning himself, and that I should not do so either.

Of course, I discussed the question further with the Prime Minister subsequently. In all those discussions he emphasised that he regarded the attacks on me as coded attacks on himself, so I decided that my duty and loyalty was to the Prime Minister and that I should remain in office.

Two and a half years ago, I did play some part in helping the Prime Minister into the position that he occupies today. I have always believed, and still believe, that in supporting him then I made the right choice, and I now wish to say one thing to him; it goes to the heart of the way in which the Government conduct themselves.

There is something wrong with the way in which we make our decisions. The Government listen too much to the pollsters and the party managers. The trouble is that

[Mr. Norman Lamont]

they are not even very good at politics, and they are entering too much into policy decisions. As a result, there is too much short-termism, too much reacting to events, and not enough shaping of events. We give the impression of being in office but not in power.

Far too many important decisions are made for 36 hours' publicity. Yes, we are politicians as well as policy-makers; but we are also the trustees of the nation. I believe that in politics one should decide what is right and then decide the presentation, not the other way round. Unless this approach is changed, the Government will not survive, and will not deserve to survive.

It is a great change to return to the Back Benches after 14 years in government, Madam Speaker, but I have always been proud to be a Member of this House and not just a Minister. Today, when I walked through Westminster Hall and up the stairs into the Lobby, I felt exactly the same pride and excitement as when I first entered this House 21 years ago. I look forward with anticipation to the great parliamentary events and battles that lie ahead.

Madam Speaker: The ten-minute rule motion is not to be moved. We now come to the main motion of the day on the conduct of Government economic and social policy.

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr. Khabra) not to move his Bill when there are so many right hon. and hon. Members present who wish to demonstrate the overwhelming opposition of the House to any attempt to legalise euthanasia?

Madam Speaker: It is perfectly in order. The hon. Gentleman does not wish to move his motion. It is not a Bill; it is a motion. If he does not wish to move the motion, he is entitled not to do so.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. It has come to my notice that the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr.Khabra) may seek to move his private Member's Bill from behind the Chair tomorrow. Would that be an abuse of the House or would it be acceptable?

Madam Speaker: It is not an abuse of the House—quite the contrary. A number of hon. Members in recent times have done precisely the same.

Pit Closures

3.51 pm

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I ask for your help in protecting the rights and responsibilities of hon. Members. As you know, the miners who were made redundant in pits last week have been declared voluntarily redundant, and that means that they do not have mortgage protection insurance which they would have if they were made compulsorily redundant.

On behalf of myself and other Members of Parliament representing pits that were closed, I sought to take up this matter with the chairman of British Coal. He declined to meet us. One of his senior executives said, in a personal capacity, that the reason for that spiteful and vindictive move by British Coal, threatening the homes as well as the jobs of those miners, was "political"—his word. That means that the only way in which hon. Members can pursue the matter is through the House.

Would it not be right for the President of the Board of Trade to explain to the House why the Government made that vindictive move—exactly the sort of short-term move that the former Chancellor of the Exchequer has been talking about—bringing huge discredit on the Government and great fear and insecurity to men who, through no fault of their own, are losing their jobs and are now threatened with losing their homes as well?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has already raised this matter with me through points of order on two previous occasions this week. As he knows, the matter is not in my hands. I have not been informed that any Minister wishes to make a statement to the House.

Orders of the Day

OPPOSITION DAY

[13TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Government Economic and Social Policy

Madam Speaker: I inform the House that I have selected the amendment standing in the name of the Prime Minister.

3.52 pm

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): I beg to move,

That this House condemns the Prime Minister's betrayal of election promises and commitments on economic and social policy; deplores the Government's intention to make the users of public services pay the price of Conservative economic and financial mismanagement; further deplores the failure to make changes in policies towards unemployment, industry and the skills revolution; and calls for new policies in these areas to strengthen British industry and the British economy, to end mass unemployment and to improve public services.

Before we embark on our debate, right hon. and hon. Members will have in their minds the statement that has just been made by the ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer. I had the opportunity to cross swords with him many times when he held the illustrious office from which he has so recently departed, and I commend him for the dignity of his statement. It was, if I may say so, as effective a speech as any he made when he was in office.

The right hon. Gentleman was wise to be wary in his endorsement of the Government's policies. What will no doubt be remembered by most of those who listened to his statement today was the revealing insight into the style and purposes of the Government from which he has so recently departed.

I must confess that it flicked across my mind when I was listening to the right hon. Gentleman that there might have been the odd political influence affecting him at the time of the 1992 Budget, especially if it is compared with the 1993 Budget—but let that pass. He was no doubt, as he constantly reminded us, acting on orders. The orders no doubt came from the pollsters and other people who appear to have such great influence on the Conservative party's policies. People will remember for some time his reference to being in office, but not in power.

When we think about the general election, we remember vividly that the Prime Minister and his colleagues made clear and specific promises to the electorate. It is reasonable to suppose that they were returned to power because people believed their promises. We now know how very few would vote for the right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues if there was an election today. There are reasons why the right hon. Gentleman has the lowest rating of any Prime Minister since polls began. The first and most important is that the right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues have cynically betrayed their pledges to the British people.

We heard a great deal about tax from the Tories at the general election. The Prime Minister promised tax cuts year on year. There were frequent promises of lower taxes from the Prime Minister, from the ex-Chancellor and from the present Chief Secretary to the Treasury. I do not know whether they meant them or whether they were told by the pollsters to say them, but they certainly said them. On 31 March, only 10 days before polling day, the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont) said on Channel 4 news:

"We will not have to increase taxes. I cannot see any circumstances in which that will be necessary."

There were pledges on specific taxes as well. At an election press conference on 27 March, just a few days before polling day, the Prime Minister said:

"We have no plans and no need to extend the scope of VAT."

We know how sincere all that was. In this year's Budget, those promises were spectacularly overturned and those pledges were shamefully betrayed.

I need not remind a suffering public that, from next April, VAT will be imposed on household heating bills at 8 per cent. In the following year, it will be hiked to 17·5 per cent. Tax increases in that Budget amounted to a staggering £17·5 billion. So it is not tax cuts year on year; it is tax increases year on year.

What a shocking betrayal of the people. Millions of families will have to find those billions of pounds from their household budgets. I very much doubt whether those at the bottom of the scale—those on income support—will have their benefit properly increased to meet the full extra costs that they have to bear. I know even more clearly that there will be no relief for the millions of families and pensioners who are just above income support level. The stark truth is that every family in the land will have to foot the cost of this Government's perfidy.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): The right hon. and learned Gentleman referred to cynicism, and talked about style and purpose. It would be helpful to the House if he could comment on this. He has made it clear that a Labour Government would not reduce public spending. Indeed, his party is committed to policies that would increase public spending. At the same time, the shadow Chancellor has said that a Labour Government would not increase taxes. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman therefore explain to the House how the Labour party, if it were in government, would pay for its policies?

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman brings to our attention the parlous state of our public finances. What we need to do above all is to deal with public finances, bring down unemployment and get back on course for economic growth—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Hon. Members on both sides of the House must settle down—*[Interruption.]* Let us have order below the Gangway. I call Mr. Smith.

Mr. Smith: The hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) knows perfectly well that the main reason why we have such a high public sector borrowing requirement is the cost of unemployment, which is the result of Government policies. It does not matter whether it is the fault of the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont) or the Prime Minister, as the right hon. Member implied: the fault lies with the Conservative party.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman really think that a deficit of £50 billion this year can be brought down by the reduction in unemployment that 2·5 or 3 per cent. growth would create? If he is opposed to public spending cuts, why does he not

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admit that the only alternative would be massive increases in taxation? His arguments today have justified the Government's public spending policy.

Mr. Smith: If that is so obvious, why did the Prime Minister say during the election campaign—when he knew the exact state of our public finances—that there was no need for increases in taxation? He said that there would be tax cuts and no cuts in public expenditure, which would be maintained. Of course, there is an explanation for that, to which I shall return. We were not told the full truth about our public finances at the last general election.

I shall now return to the promises made by the Conservative party. Incidentally, I hear that the Chancellor—the new Chancellor of the Exchequer—has been entertaining the Press Gallery at a lunch today, saying that it does not matter what one says during an election campaign: what matters is what is contained in the manifesto. His theory seemed to be that one could say whatever one liked during the campaign—if it was not in the manifesto, it did not matter. I hope that that will be repudiated.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I did not say that.

Mr. Smith: I am glad that the right hon. and learned Gentleman says that. I think that there are plenty of people who attended the Press Gallery lunch who are now in a good position to report it.

I am glad that we have achieved some degree of agreement—that someone is responsible for what he says during an election campaign. On 28 January 1992, not long before the campaign, the Prime Minister told the House:

"I have no plans to raise the top rate of tax or the level of national insurance contributions."—[*Official Report*, 28 January 1992; Vol. 202, c. 808.]

To be fair to the Prime Minister, he has kept one half of the promise—the half that applies to those at the top of the income scale.

How can the pledge that the Prime Minister made in the House possibly be squared with the increase of 1 per cent. in national insurance contributions that is to be imposed on every wage and salary earner in this country? What is the difference between 1 per cent. extra national insurance and another 1p on income tax? There is a difference, but a difference that adversely affects the lower-paid. Both policies are clearly taxes on income, but national insurance hits the lower-paid harder as it starts lower down the income scale than income tax and there are no allowances to be set against its liability.

What did Mr. Chris Patten—now Governor of Hong Kong, then chairman of the Conservative party—tell us about national insurance on 23 March 1992, during the election campaign? He said at a press conference:

"Raising national insurance contributions would be a back-door stealth tax."

We now know what the stealth was. It is the oldest trick in Tory politics to promise one thing and do another. That trick did not arrive with the pollsters during the past year or two; it has a much longer and more distinguished ancestry than that.

The Conservatives did not tell us in the election campaign that, in their first post-election Budget, they would freeze all personal allowances and bring 300,000 of the lower-paid into the income tax net. There we have it: national insurance increases, soaring VAT and a freeze on personal allowances—not quite the double whammy that we kept hearing about from the Governor of Hong Kong. It turned out to be the Tories' triple whammy, perpetrated on the British taxpayer.

Now we see clearly what the Tory tax strategy is, as we can review the Tories' long period in office. During the 1980s, when they were flush with cash from North sea oil, the biggest and best handouts went to the rich. When the Government have come unstuck in the 1990s, it is the lower-paid and ordinary taxpayers who pay the price of their incompetence. It is like the old Victorian value: "It's the rich wot gets the pleasure, it's the poor wot gets the pain."

It is not only on tax that the Government have broken their word. Let us look at their pledges on public spending. Time and again, we were told during the election campaign that the Red Book set out the detailed plans of the Government's expenditure programme, and that it was based on sound public finances. The Government vehemently and continually denied that there would be any post-election cuts in public expenditure, a subject drawn to the public's attention occasionally by some of my percipient colleagues. The Prime Minister told us on 30 March, only 10 days before polling day, at a major election press conference:

"If we were going to cut public expenditure, we would have done it before and I don't believe it is economically right. I have said that in the past, and there is no need to do it whatsoever. So you can rule out any prospect of that."

Those words could not be much clearer: any prospect of public expenditure cuts emphatically ruled out—before the election.

We now know what a false prospectus that was, and I hope that everyone, especially those conned into voting Tory last year, will keep that clearly in mind as cuts in public service unfold in the months ahead. We also know that the Prime Minister and his colleagues, especially the former Chancellor, massaged the public borrowing figures downwards in the 1992 Red Book.

The *Financial Times* of 12 October 1992 told us that the former Chancellor had, in an internal Treasury note, instructed officials to recalculate projections for the public sector borrowing requirement in the five years to 1996-97, to pull them down if possible to zero by the end of the period. Despite—probably—valiant efforts inside the Treasury, its officials did not quite make it to zero, but they got the figure down to £6 billion at the end of the period. This was the projection for the PSBR before the election.

After the election, the £6 billion mysteriously jumped to £35 billion in the 1993 PSBR projection. The Government were correctly condemned by the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee for what it called the former Chancellor's

"cavalier approach to massaging or falsifying statistics for political reasons."

Even the deputy editor of *The Spectator*—I do not think that he can be accused of left-wing scaremongering, which is the major objection to the Labour party at the moment—felt obliged to comment on the 1992 Budget in his issue of 20 March this year, as follows:

"The Budget executed a great deceit on the electorate. Since the election campaign of a year ago, honest dealing by the Tories has been rare. The first 1993 Budget provided evidence of the cynicism behind the smirks and mock sincerity on the faces of the First and Second Lords of the Treasury."

What is the consequence for the nation of all this? It has been signalled clearly enough, especially by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. Public expenditure cuts are now being secretly planned; not only will they totally overturn all the solemn assurances given by the Prime Minister before the election, but they will gravely undermine the crucial public services which are vital to the security and well-being of millions of our fellow citizens.

Will the axe fall on pensioners entitled to exemptions from prescription charges, which are now at a record £4·25 an item? *[Interruption.]* That may be amusing for Conservative Members, but it is not for millions of people who are gravely worried that it might occur.

Will it be hotel charges of £30 a night for overnight stays in hospital? Will it be a payment for visits to GPs or, as predicted in *The Guardian* of 5 June, will there be savage cuts—*[Interruption.]* I do not always support *The Guardian* or agree with everything it says—it would be surprising if I did, given what it sometimes says—but it was right to refer to the internal memorandum from the Department of Social Security, which talked precisely about cuts in invalidity benefits. There will possibly be cuts in housing benefit and in invalidity and sickness benefits.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield) *rose*——

Mr. John Smith: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman can clear up the matter.

Mr. Tim Smith: The Leader of the Opposition is indulging in the most disgraceful and irresponsible speech, and he knows it. He is frightening the most vulnerable people in our society. Is he aware that, as long as he fails to answer the questions that were put to him about the public sector borrowing requirement, the people of this country will conclude that he does not have the guts to tackle the most difficult economic question facing this country and that he is not fit to be Leader of the Opposition, let alone Prime Minister?

Mr. John Smith: Every time we refer to the Government's likely cuts, we are told that we are scaremongering. That allegation appears in the amendment to the Opposition motion. No doubt it has been drawn to the hon. Gentleman's attention that he might make that point during the debate. He has done it.

The hon. Gentleman used to be connected with a Conservative party organisation and, on the issue of scaremongering, I should like to draw his attention to a document with which he may be familiar—the Conservative campaign guide for 1992. I have been able to obtain one of the few remaining copies that has escaped the central office shredder. I am glad to have it, and I can make it available to hon. Members who want to consult it.

No doubt that guide was used by Conservative Members during the campaign. Page 12 states that there will be no increases in VAT. The material part states:

"Following a series of unfounded and irresponsible scares from the Labour Party, the **Prime Minister**"—

the words "Prime Minister" are in bold letters, so at least he is given status in the campaign guide—

"has confirmed that the Government has no intention of raising VAT further."

The document also refers to a statement in the House, and says:

"There will be no VAT increase. Unlike the Labour Party, we have published our spending plans and there is no need to raise VAT to meet them."

For good measure, the document quotes the right hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), who, as Chief Secretary to the Treasury, said that the Government had no intention of widening the scope of VAT. Was it fair comment that the Labour party was scaremongering at the time of the last election?

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: No. I am dealing with the last intervention.

I thought that Conservative Members might think that this was scaremongering. That nasty Labour party was once again maliciously misinterpreting the honest and decent intentions of these credible and straightforward Ministers. The public know exactly what happened when the Conservatives were returned to office, and they will not be fooled so easily again. VAT went up by 8 per cent., to 17·5 per cent., affecting every family in the land. Gosh, weren't we irresponsible to allege that? Weren't we wicked to make such scurrilous accusations against such honest and decent people?

Let me tell the Prime Minister that what scares the country is not what Labour predicts, because we are quite accurate in our predictions, but what the Government are capable of doing. The Government are prepared to promise anything to get elected and then to betray each and every promise afterwards.

Although the betrayal of election pledges is bitterly resented throughout the country, it is only one of the reasons for the contempt in which the Government are held. Since the general election, we have seen one catastrophe piled on another. Not even the most inventive or ruthless scaremongering among my hon. Friends would have had the audacity to allege that any Government could be so consistently incompetent, so hopelessly accident-prone and so foolishly inept.

I select but a few of the Prime Minister's recent triumphs: the billions of pounds lost in the panic and fiasco of black Wednesday; the grievous damage to our energy resources which the disastrous pit closure programme has inflected upon the country; the shady double dealing in the Matrix Churchill affair; the hopelessly bungled scandal of the education tests; and the disaster waiting to happen in the privatisation of our railways.

In response to the plummeting popularity of the Administration itself, revealed at Newbury and in the shire county elections, we have the Prime Minister's botched reshuffle. If we were to offer that tale of events to the BBC light entertainment department as a script for a programme, I think that the producers of "Yes, Minister" would have turned it down as hopelessly over the top. It might have even been too much for "Some Mothers Do 'Ave Them".

The tragedy for us all is that it is really happening—it is fact, not fiction. The man with the non-Midas touch is in charge. It is no wonder that we live in a country where the grand national does not start and hotels fall into the sea.

Mr. David Shaw: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: No.

To be fair to the ex-Chancellor from whom we have heard today, he reminded us in his last public speech

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before today that his biggest problems, one might say his major problem, had been inherited. It was a cruel twist of fate to have to succeed the right hon. Gentleman the Prime Minister. No doubt he is now reflecting that he is well out of it all.

There is proof abundant that this is a Government who are untrustworthy and incompetent—deeply untrustworthy, hopelessly incompetent. Perhaps their most defining characteristic is an aggressive, bullying and dogmatic obstinacy which assumes that they are entitled to control our affairs without the slightest recognition of the expertise of others or any opposing opinion.

The tragic farce of the education tests is a case in point. The Government are now a laughing stock as boxes of unopened test papers accumulate in schools all over the land. Of more than 4,000 secondary schools, only a handful took part. It is not that the Government were not warned; parents, teachers and head teachers unitedly told them they were wrong, but the expertise of the teaching profession is of no interest to the arrogant Secretary of State for Education.

Even the right hon. Gentleman's own advisers could not stay on the obviously sinking ship. The noble Lord Skidelsky attacked what he called "the Byzantine complexity" of the proposals:

"I was amazed,"

he said,

"at how insensitive they were to spending large sums of money on things that were no good."

He should not have been so surprised; they have a long record of doing just that. At a time when educational spending is under threat, perhaps it is worth remembering that the Government's own advisers tell us that this year's tests alone will cost £35 million.

It is of course interesting that the Government propose tests only for schools in the public sector. If they are such good news, why are the private schools to which most Conservative Ministers send their children not covered by the tests at all? Ministers know perfectly well that private schools do not want them, and they will not have to accept them—one role for schools that the Government favour and another for the rest. That is hypocritical as well as dogmatic.

Fresh from those triumphs, the Secretary of State for Education is on a collision course again with parents, teachers and head teachers, with his threats to end graduate status for primary school teachers—ideas much more associated with the last century than with the next. When will the Government learn that the teaching profession is the fundamental profession? It should be strengthened, supported and encouraged—not threatened, undermined and abused.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): What is the right hon. and learned Gentleman's view on testing? Would he abandon the three children in 10 who leave school still unable to read and write properly? How does he intend to drive up education standards? What is his education policy?

Mr. Smith: There is a perfectly good case for sensible tests agreed with the teaching profession and with parents—as is occurring in another part of this country which is not England or Wales, but which happens to be governed by the same Government. That is how the issue is being approached there, and there is no reason why the same cannot be done in England and Wales. It is not the principle of testing that is in question but the ham-handed, arrogant and foolish way in which this incompetent Government have handled it.

What possible justification can there be for the absurdities being proposed in the name of rail privatisation? What on earth makes the Government so determined to scorn the opinions of transport experts and of nearly every member of the travelling public? Hardly a day goes by without more evidence of the cost, folly and dangers of the Government's privatisation plans.

The latest assessment by Steer Davies Gleave, a transport consultancy that the Government themselves use, shows that the operating costs of a privatised rail network are likely to be £500 million more than the existing system. A Government in the grip of the privatisation virus appear immune to such compelling evidence.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): Were not the same arguments deployed against bus privatisation, which has been an overwhelming success?

Mr. Smith: I do wonder about the Conservative party. One does not have carefully to prepare traps for it—it invents its own. Is the hon. Gentleman aware of what the people of this country think about bus privatisation? I dare say that he has not been on a bus for some time.

Even worse, this week ABB Transportation, better known as British Rail Engineering Ltd., announced 900 redundancies because of a shortage of new orders amid the uncertainties of rail privatisation. That company is the only British rolling stock manufacturer that makes all its components here in Britain. Thus is delivered a further blow to British manufacturing capacity and to the skills that are needed to sustain it.

We know from other privatisation examples that the principal victims of the process are British suppliers—whether it is coal equipment, buses or trains. If we lose manufacturing capacity at York, Crewe and Derby, the inevitable result is that future rolling stock, whether for the national railway system or for London Underground, will have to be purchased abroad, adding a further dangerous twist to our already serious balance of payments deficit.

We hear platitudes from the Prime Minister about his concern for manufacturing industry, but his policies do it the most deadly damage. Evidence of that is vividly shown not just in public finances, serous though they are, but in two other crucial aspects of economic performance—high and continuingly high unemployment, and a dangerous balance of payments deficit.

Britain has the worst deficit of the Group of Seven leading industrial countries. Most alarming of all, even after the last Tory record-breaking recession, there was a balance of payments surplus of £6·7 billion at the end of the cycle. This year, as we struggle for recovery, we face an enormous £17·5 billion deficit—which, according to the Budget, is forecast to be even worse in 1994, at £18·5 billion.

That simply reflects 14 years of neglect of Britain's manufacturing sector. In sector after sector, there really is no adequate British industrial capability. Our economy is too small to be able to create the wealth on which we need

to rely. As Goldman Sachs commented in its latest economic review—it put it quite well—the British economy has suffered from

"an apparently permanent shift in the structure of the economy towards excess consumption and away from manufacturing, investment, exports and employment"—

all the things that really matter to a successful economy.

That is the key problem with the British economy. All the other depressing symptoms that we have to consider flow from that central cause. That is why we need a wholly new start in economic policies, not just a shuffle of personalities. It was deeply depressing that the need for a new approach was totally ignored by the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he breezily appeared on Radio 4 this morning.

What we need is what the Opposition have long argued for—an industrial policy that recognises that Britain's fundamental wealth creator is our manufacturing industry, and that supports it by the encouragement of sustained investment in new technology, research and development, regional policy and, above all the skills of our work force.

Dr. Spink: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: I have given way already.

It is depressing that, as today's *Financial Times* reports, a Department of Trade and Industry study shows that United Kingdom companies spend significantly less than our competitors on research and development, and it is extremely worrying that the United Kingdom share of United States patents has fallen from 10 per cent. in 1980 to 6 per cent. in 1991.

No wonder that, when *Management Today*, in its latest issue, asked leading industrialists whether they felt that the Government had a clearly defined industrial policy, 90 per cent. said no. When they were asked whether they believed that the present Government's policy was the most effective for United Kingdom industry, again 90 per cent. said no. They understand that the purpose of an industrial policy is to co-ordinate to maximum effect investment, regional development, technological improvement and export performance. We believe that to be vital; it is, after all, what other successful countries do.

We need a new approach to tackle Britain's intolerable level of unemployment. Do not the Government yet realise that the biggest drain on our public finances is the cost of the unemployment that they have created—£9,000 a year for every person unemployed? It is the greatest misery in modern Britain—for individuals, families and whole communities—and, perhaps worst of all, a massive waste of invaluable human resources. We need action on unemployment, and we need it now.

I again ask the Government to act to help our beleaguered construction industry. Why do not the Government do what we and so many others have urged and allow local authorities to spend their own capital receipts on house building and house improvement programmes, helping both the homeless and the hundreds of thousands of unemployed construction workers? Once re-employed, those workers will start to pay taxes instead of drawing benefits, and companies will make profits on which they will pay taxes, rather than declaring losses on which they pay no tax at all.

This policy is backed by the construction industries, local authorities, the Institute of Housing and many City commentators. Midland Montagu has urged the Government

"to leap at the opportunity of adopting a policy full of common sense and compassion that efficiently targets the homeless, the housing market, the construction industry, and the South East."

All we have heard from the Government is the usual dogmatic and obstinate refusal.

It is no wonder that the Government have slumped in popularity. According to the front page of today's *Daily Telegraph*—on which I rely for my information about the Conservative party—senior Tories on the 1922 Committee executive are to hold an inquest on the failure of the ex-Chancellor's sacking to halt the biggest slump in morale since the Profumo affair 30 years ago. No doubt the Prime Minister will dismiss this too as scaremongering, but as a principal participant in the Profumo affair might have said, "He would say that, wouldn't he?"

But he knows, does he not, the menace of these men in grey suits? After all, he was the beneficiary of their deadly manoeuvres against his predecessor—although he no doubt reflects that, while it took 10 years to move against her, after only 12 months they have him in their sights. If I were he, I would worry most if they sought to reassure me. Most of all, I would worry if they sought to show their solidarity with a man in a spot of bother by giving him a present—perhaps a watch inscribed, "Don't let the buggers get you down." After all, it appears to be a coded message that it is time for an early and a swift departure.

The Prime Minister cannot complain about the giving of a watch. He himself says that it is not a hanging offence. What we know, from the botched reshuffle and the abrupt dismissal of the former Chancellor, is that a hanging offence in this curious Government is loyally to carry out the Prime Minister's own policies, especially to the accompaniment of effusive declarations of his support.

The British people deserve a better Government, for they dislike intensely the concoction of betrayal, incompetence and dogmatism which are the characteristics of the present occupants of the Treasury Bench. What people are beginning to dislike just as much is the low ambition that these people have for our country.

The people of Britain do not want the low-skill, sweatshop economy which is the miserable Tory response to the challenge of competiton from Europe and the wider world. What they want is for us to become a high-skill, high-tech, high-wage economy, able to compete with the best and to succeed on the basis of our ability and the quality of our products in the markets of the world.

Mr. David Shaw: What are you frightened about? Why will you not answer a question on the nepotism and corruption on Monklands district council? *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Unless the hon. Gentleman resumes his seat and stays there, I shall take disciplinary action against him.

Mr. Smith: The people of Britain do not want any more years of high and debilitating unemployment, which destroys opportunity, squanders talent and wastes our resources. They want economic policies which support steady growth and rising employment, and which give our young people a chance to succeed.

The people of Britain do not want to see competition and dogma in the classroom. They want the best possible

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education for their children in properly resourced schools from teachers whose vital contribution is valued, not scorned.

They do not want the ever-increasing commercialisation of their health service. They want once again to feel secure in the knowledge that, when it is needed, they will be able to obtain the care that they and their families need at the time that it is required.

The people of Britain do not want a Government who twist and turn, who betray their promises and dishonour their pledges. Above all, they want a Government that they can trust. No amount of reshuffling, repackaging or re-presentation can now disguise from the British people the stark reality of a discredited Government, presided over by a discredited Prime Minister.

4.33 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): I beg to move, to leave out from 'House' to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'welcomes the widespread indications of economic recovery in the United Kingdom at a time when many other major economies are in deepening recession; recognises that the interests of industry are at the heart of the Government's policy and acknowledges the comprehensive programme of training and employment opportunities for unemployed people that the Government has put in place; welcomes the Government's commitment to its Manifesto pledges including its commitment to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of public services through the Citizen's Charter; deplores the scare-mongering stories about public spending peddled by the Opposition; and applauds the Government for its determination to maintain low inflation, sound public finances and firm control over total public expenditure upon which a sustainable economic recovery depends.'.

As the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) sits down, I have little doubt what is in his mind: "That'll keep John Edmonds quiet for a week or so."

Before I turn to the substance of the debate, I wish to say a word or two to my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont) regarding his remarks at the commencement of today's debate. In his speech, my right hon. Friend spoke of a number of matters of very great importance, including the case that we have discussed on many occasions over the past two years for an independent central bank.

I share my right hon. Friend's loathing of inflation. That is an issue that we discussed frequently. We both saw the case for an independent central bank, able to take decisions on the implementation of monetary policy. There is a genuine case for that. I do not dissent from my right hon. Friend's remarks about it.

The very real concern that I have always faced is one that I believe is spread widely across the House: the need for accountability to Parliament for decisions on monetary policy matters. Were a way to be found to get the benefits of an independent central bank without the loss of parliamentary accountability, my views would be very close to those of my right hon. Friend, but I have to say to my right hon. Friend—I believe, from our many discussions, that it is a view he shares—that what is more important than the institutional arrangements is the underlying policy that is actually being followed. On that, I do not believe that an independent central bank would have brought down inflation any more rapidly than we have been able to achieve. *[Interruption.]* That is something for which I am happy to pay tribute to my right hon. Friend.

Also, I entirely share my right hon. Friend's vision of the economic goals of this Government—*[Interruption.]*—and of the difficult path that we have had to follow to achieve and maintain low inflation and restore sustainable growth—*[Interruption.]*—and employment. My right hon. Friend and I—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must settle down. Hon. Members do not have to listen, but whoever is speaking has to be heard. There is a great distinction between those two statements. The Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend and I faced crises both before and after September last year. We worked together towards objectives that we shared, and we were always agreed as to our main goals: low inflation, sustainable economic growth, an increase in prosperity for all our people as medium and long-term objectives. I believe that history will look favourably on my right hon. Friend's economic and financial skills, but a strong Government need political skills as well—*[Interruption.]*—when leading a democratic society and, in particular, when handling a lively House of Commons with a small majority.

Dealing with the problems of a small majority is a fundamental fact of democracy that no one dare or should even attempt to overlook. However, as we have shown in the battle over inflation and in our pursuit of European policy, against great difficulties in this House, we were not prepared in the Government to allow short-term difficulties to deflect us from what were the right long-term policies for this country. That was the position, and it is the position.

I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his support and help throughout the past two and half difficult years. I acknowledge the difficulties that he has faced and the courage with which he has faced those difficulties, and I accept the support that he has offered to the Government for the future. I welcome the opportunity to debate economic policies at a time when output is up, exports are up, productivity is up, confidence is up and, as announced today, when business starts are up.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East has just made the speech that we expected of him. At the end of it, we are no better informed about his economic policies than we were at the beginning of it—or even about whether he has any economic policies or whether he has progressed beyond the sound bites that so frequently construct them.

We do know something about the right hon. and learned Gentleman. We know that he is the man who announced the biggest tax increase in peacetime history, just before the general election. He is the man who said confidence would carry on falling, just before the CBI announced the highest level of confidence in 10 years, and he is the man who calls for a debate on the economy just as the economy is recovering. I hope that, with timing like that, the right hon. and learned Gentleman never takes up boxing, because it would be very painful. Many things can be said about him, but "floats like a butterfly, stings like a bee" is clearly not among them.

What does seem right about the right hon. and learned Gentleman was said by the right hon. Member for

Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). I remind the right hon. and learned Gentleman what his right hon. Friend said about him:

"I do not think that Members of Labour's Front Bench would have even two ideas about what to do with the economy if they came to power . . . a series of sound bites glued together and called an economic policy is not an economic policy."—[*Official Report*, 20 May 1993; Vol. 225, c. 420.]

That remains as true at the end of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's speech as it was before.

Today's debate goes right to the heart of the fundamental divide between the Conservative party and the Labour party. The Labour party stands for higher public spending, higher taxation and more state interference in business and industry. We stand for controlling public spending, bringing direct taxation down where we can and getting the state off the backs of businesses and individuals.

Let me deal with one matter that was fundamental to the right hon. and learned Gentleman's speech. Let me turn immediately and clearly to social policy. I did not come into politics to dismantle the welfare state. I have no intention of doing so and neither does my party. At the moment, in different parts of the country there are many vulnerable people who are worried. They are worried because the Opposition systematically, day after day, leak after leak, sound bite after sound bite, have sought to frighten them. The Opposition have peddled scare after scare——

Several hon. Members *rose*——

The Prime Minister: I will give way later.

The Opposition have peddled scare after scare, yet the leader of the Labour party is deep into moral outrage—righteousness to self-righteousness is second nature to him. He is an honourable man, one might say—surely not the man to spread scare stories; surely not a man to condone scare stories, so let me be charitable to him. Perhaps he did not know—had no idea—when the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) swore that we would privatise the national health service, when the right hon. and learned Gentleman must have known that that was untrue. He could not have known about that, because he is an honourable man.

What did the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) say? He said that the Government were

"threatening to cut pensions and benefits for the worse off."

In the autumn statement 13 days later, pensions and benefits rose. I am sure that the right hon. and learned Gentleman did not know what his hon. Friend would say, because he is an honourable man and would not have sanctioned it.

It was the right hon. and learned Gentleman's party that repeatedly claimed that trust hospitals were leaving the health service. They were not: the Labour party knew that they were not, yet it needlessly scared sick people for a vote or two, time after time. The right hon. and learned Gentleman could not have authorised that, because he is an honourable man—or so I had thought. But then I discovered what he had to say:

"What's going on . . . will lead to the privatisation of the NHS."

That was flatly untrue, of course, and another scare. I wonder who could have spread it? The right hon. and learned Gentleman spread it. In the Labour party the scares come from the top and behind that moral righteousness is someone who has no scruples whatever.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman claims that the Conservative party won the election by telling untruths. Let me remind him about that election. It was his party that published 10 patient case histories and had to withdraw them when it turned out that it had made them up. It was his party that made up untruths about a sick little girl and spread them across the country. That is the party that dares to talk to us about standards. There is a word for that, but it is not parliamentary.

Let me turn to the subject of public spending. The Government know that, if the economy is to grow, the tax man cannot take more of the proceeds than the country can afford. In the Conservative party, we understand that people want more money in their own pockets and do not want the Government to spend their money for them. Of course, in the recession, spending had to increase. I do not apologise for that increase in spending—it was necessary in the recession and it was necessary to protect the vulnerable. I saw no support from Labour Members for any expenditure reductions throughout the recession and every support for dramatic increases week after week from every Member of the Opposition parties.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: Later.

During that recession, not only did expenditure necessarily rise but income necessarily fell and that added to the borrowing requirement. Even though a great deal of that will reverse as growth returns, it is going to take time. That is why we have embarked on the public spending review. Governments have to take difficult decisions. We have to face structural increases in public spending, as any Government would. There are demographic changes, changes in student numbers and more elderly people, especially the very old.

As we address those problems, the Opposition gaily spread mischief—a little fib here, a little scare there—yet as it does so it is carrying out a review into social expenditure. It does not have the courage to do it directly; it has farmed it out to the commission on social policy. The only form of contracting out that the Labour party approves of is contracting out difficult decisions to other people.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman cannot run away from what he said:

"We"

—that is, the Labour party—

"should be prepared to re-examine everything. I have not ruled anything out".

That is its position on social policy and Labour Members nod in agreement. Daily, the Labour party invites us to rule things out, while it examines everything—pensions, child benefit and every other aspect of social policy.

How responsible the right hon. and learned Gentleman is. I suppose that that comment shows that he wants to grapple with real problems, but when he faces other audiences, he wants to rule everything out. Which is the real right hon. and learned Gentleman? The gritty, determined facer of problems who wants to examine everything where nothing is ruled out, or the wriggler, twisting and turning, saying one thing to one audience and another thing to another audience?

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): Could the Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury, tell us what he was doing during the long period of recession, which has caused so much misery throughout the country? Was he looking the other way? Was he train spotting? Was he walking into cupboards? Has there ever been a more wimpish approach to the problems that face this country than that which he has shown?

The Prime Minister: I shall tell the hon. Gentleman directly: we have been presiding over a policy that brought inflation down to 1·3 per cent. and interest rates down to 6 per cent. so that this country is now poised for the largest growth in the European Community this year, next year and probably for the years beyond that. We have been taking the long-term view, not the short-term, option. That is what we have been doing—I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me the opportunity to point that out—while he has opposed every policy that has brought down inflation and interest rates.

The Opposition will be glad to know that our review of public spending will be careful and thorough. There will be two criteria: are any changes fair, and are vulnerable people protected? When the answer is no, we shall not make the changes. When the answer is yes, we shall set out to the House the implications of those changes. There are no soft options. The Government's duty is to examine them all and pick the right ones. We know that we need to reduce public borrowing, which is why, in the last Budget, we decided that some increase in revenue was necessary.

We decided to introduce value added tax on fuel and power, not least because it would help meet our Rio commitments, commitments that the Opposition urged us to extend. We had every reason to expect cross-party support. The Liberal Democrats had stated in their green paper:

"Liberal Democrats advocate as a first priority the imposition of a tax on energy . . . The UK is unusual amongst EC members in not applying even standard rates of VAT on domestic fuels . . . we would press forward . . . by ending the anomalous zero rate of VAT on fuel".

Where were those men of principle in the Division Lobbies after the Budget?

What did the Labour party say? It said:

"Zero rating on items such as food, fares, books and children's clothing should remain as an essential part of the VAT system."

That was quite clear. It continued:

"We will also use the tax system, as well as regulation, to help protect the environment."

That can mean only one thing. In the list of zero-rated items, there is no reference to zero rating for domestic fuel. The Opposition intended to put it up, and they know it. If they did not, will they tell me now why it was not in their list of zero-rated items? The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East does not answer—no doubt, as a QC, he believes in the right to silence for an accused.

When we introduced VAT on fuel and power, we made it clear that there would be extra help for less well-off pensioners and others on low incomes. I am glad to repeat that commitment. In recent months, the right hon. and learned Gentleman has made a great deal of the VAT increase, as have his hon. Friends.

Ms Harriet Harman (Peckham): So have the voters.

The Prime Minister: So did the voters, says the right hon. Lady. What the right hon. and learned Gentleman did not mention is that he was the Energy Minister who let electricity prices rise. What was the increase—5 per cent., 10 per cent., 15 per cent.? No, it was 30 per cent. over and above inflation. What did the right hon. and learned Gentleman do to help the less well-off? I shall tell the House what he did—absolutely nothing. The position is clear.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman cares about pensioners when he is in opposition—how he cares about pensioners in opposition—but in government he disregards them absolutely. One may think that that was a single lapse but, in case anybody thinks that that is so, let me say that the right hon. and learned Gentleman was a member of the Government who twice held back the Christmas bonus and cut capital spending on the health service. That is his record, and he should be ashamed of it.

There is another case where the right hon. and learned Gentleman's actions do not match his words. Today, he again attacked our borrowing levels, but his election promises would have put up borrowing way above the present level. He is still at it. "Let's spend £6 billion of capital receipts," says the right hon. and learned Gentleman. "Let's spend an extra £1·5 billion on public sector pay." The shadow Chancellor says, "Let's renegotiate our rebate and pay more to the European Community."

Is there any area of Government spending that the Opposition are prepared to cut? Perhaps the shadow Chancellor can tell us. Perhaps we could have another sound bite to tell us where he would find the necessary savings. Or perhaps the deputy leader of the Labour party can tell us; after all, she came into government to implement the cuts in education that her hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) refused to make.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Will my right hon. Friend explain why, if the Opposition are sincerely worried about the disadvantaged people of this country, they demand more and more overseas aid, day in, day out? *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. We all like a little bit of fun and hilarity, but we also want to hear the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: The fundamental point about overseas aid is that, in order to sustain it as the Government have done, one needs to pursue the right economic policies, as we have also done.

I am glad that the motion mentions manifesto promises—glad, but a little surprised because the right hon. and learned Gentleman has scrapped all his election promises. We stand by our manifesto policies. We promised action on trade unions, housing, lotteries, railways, education and asylum, and we have kept our promises. Bills on each of those matters have already passed through the House. We promised to uprate pensions and benefits, and we have done so. We promised to maintain child benefit, and we have done so. We promised to increase real resources for the health service, and we have done so; year on year, spending is at record levels. They are the promises we made, and we have kept each one.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): When the Prime Minister went on his trip down memory lane to Brixton and other ethnic areas, did he tell the people that he was going to take away the right of appeal for visitors?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman knows as well as any hon. Member that the great improvement in race

relations in this country is directly related to the firm but fair immigration policies pursued by this Government. I am surprised to hear him venture down that track, in view of his record of favouring good race relations.

We promised to deliver low inflation, and we have delivered on that promise. We promised to resume economic growth, and it is now resuming. Inflation, at 1·3 per cent., is at the lowest level for 30 years. Interest rates, at 6 per cent., are the lowest in the Community. There are now too many signs of recovery for even the Opposition to ignore them. Manufacturing output has increased for months in succession and unemployment has fallen three months in a row. It is too high—I share that view—but it is moving in the right direction, and sooner than most people expected.

It is certainly sooner than the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) expected, because, after the Budget, he said:

"I make one Budget forecast—that, after the Budget, unemployment will rise this month, next month and for months afterwards".—[*Official Report*, 17 March 1993; Vol. 221, c. 289.]

One day later, unemployment fell. The next month, it fell again, and the next month, it fell again. Another sound bite is needed, I think.

The recession has been damaging, and recovery has not come easily, but it is now under way—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Hon. Members must come to order. The bawling and shouting coming from the Back Benches this afternoon is utterly disgraceful. *[Interruption.]* I know who the Members responsible are, and I need no one to point them out for me.

The Prime Minister: Some time ago, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East admitted:

"we change our policies as we move towards a different election . . . We'd be a very foolish Party if we went into an election in . . . 1995-96 with exactly the same policies".

That is certainly true. But whose policies were they? They were the right hon. and learned Gentleman's. He was the undisputed author of Labour's defeat. He was the man who drew up the disastrous shadow Budget. Hon. Members may remember the hype, the fake presentation, as if it were a real Budget, and the responsible tone—the right hon. and learned Gentleman even posed for photographs outside the Treasury. Lots of passers-by do that, but they never get into the Treasury.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman talks of broken promises, as does the shadow Chancellor, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East. That is a good sound bite, but for the wrong party. The Labour party has broken every promise that it made about future policy at the election. Every one has gone to the social justice commission.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman said:

"We must be prepared to examine in an open-minded way some of the fundamental features of our approach. What is the right balance between universal and selective benefits".

It was not Milton Friedman who said that, nor my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary, nor even Lord Desai—no doubt he would have been sacked if he had said it. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East himself said it. Yet time after time he accuses us of examining aspects of public expenditure that any responsible Government would need to examine.

He is the man who said that his planned increases in pensions and child benefits were essential, and that his tax proposals were fair, reasonable and popular. They have been so popular that he has dropped them all. So much for his promises. I would rather listen to the late Robert Maxwell on pension probity than to the right hon. and learned Gentleman.

I know that the exchange rate mechanism and economic and monetary union are matters of some importance to hon. Members on both sides of the House. Since we left the ERM, there has been substantial debate about monetary policy and the possibility of economic and monetary union. In the negotiations at Maastricht I sought and secured an opt-out on the single currency because I was sceptical of its economic impact across Europe and its artificial deadlines, and because I believed that such a decision was for the House to make.

Since then, economic developments in the European Community have strengthened the reasons for caution that I set out. The European Community economies have diverged rather than converged. As we come out of recession, our main partners are heading into a recession. Some of our European partners remain keen on early monetary union, although many of their central banks are less keen. Even the keenest must now see the difficulties. The criteria for monetary union will simply not be met. When I was negotiating at Maastricht, the idea of a monetary union in 1997 looked ambitious, perhaps even a little dubious. I have to tell the House that it looks wholly unrealistic today.

The economies of Europe are not remotely ready for one currency throughout the 12, soon to be 16, countries, and I believe that they will not be ready—if they ever will be—for many years. That is not an anti-European view; I simply do not believe that the economic circumstances will be right, and if they are not right the damage that proceeding would cause the Community would be profound, and I should not wish to see it occur. If some of our partners decided to go ahead prematurely, that would be an economic mistake. I do not believe that we should go with them.

We have sought reform of the exchange rate mechanism. I make no secret of the fact that I prefer stable exchange rates, and so does industry. But I cannot accept that the present operation of the ERM is satisfactory. Sterling was forced out, in the circumstances described by my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames, but so was the lira. The franc, the peseta, the escudo, the punt and others have at different times been put under great pressure. Certainly, I could not recommend that sterling return at present. We should need greater convergence between the monetary policies appropriate for all the Community economies, and we should need to be satisfied that the system would be operated to the benefit of all its members.

In January, I made it clear that those circumstances would not apply this year. I now doubt whether they will apply for some years ahead—possibly they will not apply in this Parliament.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): There will be a widespread welcome throughout the party for what my right hon. Friend has just said to the House, and there will be great support for the policies that he has enunciated throughout his speech.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and delighted to have a party at ease with itself.

[The Prime Minister]

It is clear that the Labour party has no policies at all, and certainly no economic policies. When it had policies, they lost it the election. As the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) put it—rather cruelly, I thought—the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East

"bears the primary responsibility for tax and economic policies that lost Labour the election."

And now Labour has none. That is not my view alone. It is clearly shared by Mr. Edmonds of the GMB, the union that sponsors the Leader of the Opposition—or at least, it sponsored him until last Sunday. I am not sure whether things have changed since then.

Mr. Edmonds says that Labour has an identity problem and asks whether the voters

"know what Labour stands for".

He says that Labour must shake itself out of its lethargy. He asks:

"Where was the Labour movement"

during the past few months? He may well ask.

The Labour leadership cannot have been examining economic policy, because the shadow Chancellor would not recognise economic policy if it gripped him by the windpipe. The Labour leadership may have been absorbed in its falling membership, or it may have been trying to fight off the defeat of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's party reforms.

There is one area of total agreement between the right hon. and learned Gentleman and myself: he wants one man, one vote—a novel concept for Labour. He is right about that, and he has my support. Unfortunately, he does not have Mr John Edmonds' support. Mr. Edmonds wants one member, one vote, so long as he can be the member and he, and nobody else, can exercise the vote.

So long as the Labour party remains subordinate to the trade unions in policy, a paid for and wholly owned subsidiary of the trade unions, Labour Members will sit on that side of the Chamber. I shall tell the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East why he and his party fail to convince even the leader of the union that sponsors him. It is because Labour is a party without policies and without principles that it will remain, in the short and the long term, a party without power. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members leaving the Chamber please do so quickly? *[Interruption.]* Order. Come along.

5.9 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I believe that what we have heard and seen this afternoon is nothing less than the beginning of the end of the right hon. Gentleman's premiership. I say that not because of the lack of success of his speech—although I have to tell him that, if he had bothered to turn round he would have seen his fate indelibly written on the faces of Conservative Members. I say it not because of the effectiveness of the speech by the Leader of the Opposition, although, in its way, the right hon. and learned Gentleman's was an effective speech, typical of the speeches that he delivers—good for a knockabout but not providing too much revelation about Labour party policy.

I say it because of the speech by the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont). I believe that the two speeches that we have just heard, and all the other speeches in the debate, will be forgotten when the right hon. Gentleman's words will be remembered and will reverberate down through the months and years that remain of the Government.

I do not know when the Prime Minister will go. It may take weeks or it may take months. But when he does go, this afternoon will be the occasion that people will point to as the start of that process. As the House will have recognised, the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames delivered a speech of considerable dignity. He was clear about his own view of his role in what has happened over the time that he has held high office. However, the speech was devastating in its criticism of the Government and devastating, too, in its criticism of the right hon. Gentleman's friend, the Prime Minister.

The right hon. Gentleman lifted the lid—particularly in the last three or four minutes of his speech—on a Government who lack clear leadership and are blown hither and thither by opinion polls, a Government prepared to fiddle with interest rates for political purposes and infected by short-termism—those are not my words, but those of the right hon. Gentleman—and a Government who lack direction.

The right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames has shown—more clearly than the words of any Opposition Member could have done—what lies at the heart of the Government of this country. The Conservative party is riven by a virulent civil war, and is without a leader who can mark any kind of course forward for the nation. *[Interruption.]* I invite Conservative Members to read tomorrow, not my speech nor that of the Leader of the Opposition, but that of the former Chancellor, who was a part of the Government and who has taken the lid off it in such a devastating way. I say again that his is the speech that will be remembered.

We now know that the Government cannot bring themselves to face the immensity of the problems that they have created. They cannot recognise the reality of the misery that they have inflicted on ordinary people's lives. They do not understand the concept of fairness, do not care about betrayal and cannot grasp the opportunities that now lie ahead for our country.

The Prime Minister clearly thought that sacking his Chancellor would provide a way out of his problems. But the reverse has proved to be the case, as he was clearly exposed in the words of the former Chancellor today. The Government's crisis, as he expressed it, is not a crisis of men, but also a crisis of measures. It is no good the Prime Minister just changing the people: he must change the policies of the Government as well. That change was called for by the clarion voice heard at Newbury and in the county council elections.

The Prime Minister has given his answer this afternoon. He has changed the Chancellor who he said did nothing wrong but intends to stick to the policies that have done this country so much damage. The departure of the Chancellor did not resolve the Government's divisions—it highlighted them. There are now two Conservative Governments—the Government of the new Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Government of the new Home Secretary. And stuck in the middle of this increasingly bad-tempered contest is the Prime Minister, relegated to the job more of referee than of leader.

The Chancellor's departure did not clarify the Government's economic policies, either—it muddied the

waters still further. We are yet to have a clear statement from the new Chancellor of the Exchequer. Such reticence is uncharacteristic of the right hon. and learned Gentleman. When he was Home Secretary, he was never off our television screens, where he expounded the details of the Government's economic strategy. Presumably, it will now be the new Home Secretary who, having secured for himself in his deal with the Prime Minister a position on the Cabinet's economic committees, will now speak for the Government on such matters as the exchange rate mechanism. What has been sauce for the pro-European goose will now be sauce for the Euro-sceptic gander.

Above all, the Chancellor's departure did not add to the Prime Minister's authority over his party or over his Government. As we saw this afternoon, it diminished his standing and undermined his authority, which I believe will never be recoverable. Only the present Prime Minister could achieve this singular double—to make people support Arthur Scargill and to make people feel sorry for the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames.

The right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames is entitled to feel aggrieved. He is entitled to ask what it was that he did wrong. Will the Prime Minister tell him which of his policies he found unacceptable? No; he made it clear that he will not. Nor will he tell him in which areas he was incompetent at his job. This morning we heard from the new Chancellor of Exchequer on the radio that his predecessor was simply hounded out of office by the press.

Is it, then, the measure of our Prime Minister, that, in the very week in which he told the *Financial Times* that he would not be bullied into a reshuffle, he was? Let me quote the Prime Minister's own words:

"Neither now, nor at any stage in the future, are my reshuffles going to be preceded by assassinations of my colleagues."

Despite that, that is exactly what the right hon. Gentleman allowed to happen.

Deep in those words is a message for the whole Government. The Prime Minister agreed with his Chancellor's policies because they were the Prime Minister's policies, set down by No. 10. The Prime Minister never questioned his Chancellor's competence; they acted together. The Prime Minister and his Chancellor were a team. They stood shoulder to shoulder. The Prime Minister saw no need for the Chancellor to depart after black Wednesday. Why? Because, as the ex-Chancellor himself revealed so clearly, although it was damaging for the country to have a Chancellor who had lost credibility, it was convenient for the Prime Minister to have a Chancellor who protected him. That is the reason why the right hon. Gentleman did not resign.

This afternoon we must do more than debate the Government's appalling record of mismanagement in the past: we must put forward the right policies for the future. As the new Chancellor said, he inherits an enormous hole —the black hole of the Budget deficit. Substantial public borrowing will often be necessary. But we do not believe that we can wish away a Budget deficit of this magnitude, which bears down on the whole nation and on our chances of recovery.

We are dealing with the consequences of years of economic mismanagement under the Conservatives. We are now a nation living in debt—this year, 8 per cent. of our national income. The very Government who have told us that they are responsible with public money are now borrowing £1 billion a week. That is £50 every week for every household throughout the land. The interest cost alone of the extra debt which the Government have generated is about £4 billion each year. That alone is the equivalent of 2·5p on income tax just to pay the interest on the Tory debt. Those are the results of deep structural problems in the British economy, but they have been exacerbated by the inept economic policies of the Government.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): The right hon. Gentleman speaks as though the recession is an entirely United Kingdom fact and has nothing to do with Europe. Surely the right hon. Gentleman, a passionate advocate of a united states of Europe, realises that the recession has applied throughout the Economic Community. If the right hon. Gentleman is really saying that the recession is entirely home-grown, he is revealing himself to be even more economically illiterate than I would have given him credit for. Is he admitting that or not?

Mr. Ashdown: Of course I concede—I have always conceded it—that there is a worldwide recession in place, but the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) has to address the question that was so clearly put by his colleague the ex-Chancellor. He made it quite clear that the depths of our recession, particularly in 1987, 1988 and 1989 when the Prime Minister himself was Chancellor, area direct result of the Government's economic ineptness in those years. The ex-Chancellor put the blame for the special position of our country and its deep recession and the damage that has been done on his Government's own policies. I invite the hon. Member for Teignbridge to read that speech.

The country expects—the country demands—that all parties should concentrate now on putting together the policies to start to put Britain on the right road. We know who is to blame for the mess, and the country knows who is to blame for the mess. What people want to know is how we are going to get out of it and who is to get us out of it. The Government have tried one way of tackling the deficit; they have put up taxes. The Government say that they were forced to do that. If that were so, it might be understandable. I do not believe that it is always wrong for a Government to change their mind. If the country is being driven on to the rocks by Government policies, a change of course is needed. Frankly, I would much rather have a Government who changed their mind to be right once in a while than a Government who never changed their minds and were always wrong.

But the Government's explanations for those events will not wash. They say—we heard it clearly in the Prime Minister's speech—that they were somehow taken by surprise by the figures that they inherited after the election, but who did they inherit them from? Themselves. Who had better access to those figures than they? They say that they did not know what was coming, but the projections for the future of the public sector borrowing requirement were widely canvassed by *The Guardian* and other newspapers well before the election date.

The opposition parties—ourselves and Labour—at least sought to address that position. By contrast, the Government sought to hide it from the nation in order to get themselves elected. We tried to tell the country the truth. The Government deliberately told the people a lie. What is more, they knew that it was a lie. They could not have known otherwise. The Leader of the Opposition says

[Mr. Ashdown]

that it was a betrayal. Perhaps it was, but it was worse than a betrayal; it was a deliberate act of deceit upon the people of this country.

The Government put themselves forward on a false prospectus for the nation that would have done honour to a Maxwell pension fund prospectus. If the Government had been a company, they would be up before the courts for fraud. They knew it to be a fraudulent prospectus for the nation.

Mr. Nicholls: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ashdown: No, I will not give way. I have given way to the hon. Gentleman once. I have not the slightest intention of doing so again.

Who will ever be able to believe a Conservative promise again? Now, of course, it is the nation that must pay for that deceit. The Government have decided that not the whole nation will pay for that deceit—of course not. It will be the poor and the most vulnerable who must pay for the Government's deception and for their mistakes. That was the real stinging injustice in this year's Budget—not just the imposition of VAT on domestic fuel without adequate compensation, but the fact that in the Budget overall the poorest tenth of our nation are proportionately asked to pay twice as much as the richest tenth. That is the depth of the injustice of this Government and of their economic policy.

If there is a price to be paid to dig the country out of the hole that was created by Ministers, it should be fairly shared among the whole nation. We believe that there is a sense of fairness in the British people. It is a sense which has been continuously ignored by the Conservative party and by the Government, a sense which has been discouraged by their measures, and a sense which is not allowed to express itself through positive policies set out by the Government. But that instinct of fairness is still strong in our nation. It is the instinct that will undo the Government's second strategy, the second act of betrayal.

Having found out that even putting up taxes has not done the trick, such is the scale of the economic mess that we are in, the Government are now telling us that they will resort to draconian public cuts—cuts again in our welfare state, our benefits system, which yet again hit the weakest, hit the poorest and hit the most vulnerable.

So how should we tackle the deficit? Of course there should be savings in public expenditure where they are possible. An efficient tax and benefits system would save millions of pounds. If we had a competent or even reforming Government, savings would be found and could be made. The Government are bloated on bureaucracy. They make expensive mistakes such as the poll tax. They spend a fortune closing down coal mines. They waste money on flawed education tests. They use taxpayers' money to sweeten the implementation of grant-maintained schools. They deliberately boosted public spending before the election, knowing full well that they were not prepared to pay for that spending after the election. But, if savings can be made, they will be made on the margins. Savings alone will not cover the massive Conservative deficit.

Of course we should be closing tax loopholes too, as the Labour party proposes, but that will have an affect only on the margins of the massive Conservative deficit. Of course we should be stimulating employment. Of course it is true that the Government have failed to provide policies for that. However, even if we accept the Government's own forecasts of economic growth in this decade, we are still left with the projected deficit of £30 billion in 1997-98. That is the measure of the economic disaster that has been brought about over the past 14 years.

I say to the Labour party that there is now no realistic growth forecast which by itself brings the public sector deficit down to manageable levels over an acceptable period. Frankly, Labour is deceiving itself and the public if it pretends otherwise. We will probably have to come to the crunch to answer the question that Labour seems so reluctant to answer. If the choice for paying for the Government's mistakes is between cutting into the body and the bone of our welfare state in a way that penalises the most vulnerable and spreading the burden fairly through taxation, there can be only one answer. Paying the price for the Government's mistakes is a burden that must be shared justly by us all, not paid for by the poor, the elderly and the vulnerable.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I do not know what the right hon. Gentleman's plan is to try to secure a victory in the Christchurch by-election, but he talks about fairly sharing the burden. He is talking in the context of raising taxes. Let me explain to him that in the first 10 years of the Tory Government the richest 1 per cent. in Britain had £26·2 billion in tax cuts. Instead of calling upon working-class people in Christchurch or anywhere else, the right hon. Gentleman should be supporting the idea of clawing back that £26·2 billion from the richest 1 per cent. They have had the money, and they must foot the bill.

Mr. Ashdown: I hope that Labour Front-Bench Members heard the statement by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). They are the ones he needs to persuade. They are the ones who will not say the kind of things that he has said. The hon. Gentleman has asked me what our strategy is for the Christchurch by-election. It is quite simple. It is to have the strategy that we had in Newbury—to tell the blunt truth to the people of this country. They want to hear and are prepared to hear about the seriousness of the economic position and about what must be done to solve it.

They do not want betrayals, such as the Government's betrayal of the nation through their deceit at the general election. They do not want to hear either, as the voters of Newbury so clearly showed, a party such as the Labour party which is prepared to say what must be done, but not how it is to be paid for. That is how we won Newbury and, if we win Christchurch, that is how we shall win it.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): The right hon. Gentleman talks about the blunt truth. He said earlier that any public expenditure savings could be only marginal. Will he now tell the House the blunt truth? By how much would his party wish to increase the standard rate of income tax to close the deficit?

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman's own Chancellor could not at this stage give him figures about the public sector borrowing requirement and could not tell him what he will do in the autumn of this year. The hon. Gentleman makes a brave try, but I shall not answer his ludicrous question.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): Why not?

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) asked a question that his own Chancellor would not answer. I have made it clear—I have said something that the Labour party will not say—that rather than cutting into the bone and the body of the welfare state, if we have to balance our public sector borrowing sensibly and responsibly by finding tax, we shall take that view.

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): How much?

Mr. Ashdown: The right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) asks, "How much?" He knows perfectly well that the figures are not yet available to anyone—not even the Government. The right hon. Gentleman should realise that I have laid down some clear principles about how we should deal with the PSBR. His party will not do that.

The people of Britain have worked long and hard to build a decent system of welfare provision. Governments have not paid for it; it has been the people and the taxpayers who have paid for it. It would now be an act of malice and vandalism for the Government to destroy that achievement. If the Government wish to add that to their other betrayals they will never be forgiven.

I shall tell the Government what I believe the British people now want from them today. They want a Government who will be honest with them and Opposition parties that will face up to the truth. They want a Government who show that they believe in fairness and who do not penalise the poorest and the most vulnerable for their own mistakes. They want a Government who will set a clear strategy and who will stick to it. They want a strategy that will encourage small businesses, stimulate enterprise, initiate a powerful programme to get the long-term unemployed back to work, give a clear lead so that Britain can make the best out of its future in Europe, prudently invest in the future, especially in skills and in a modern infrastructure, and give independence to the Bank of England to act as a bulwark against inflation.

Was it not amazing that we heard for the second time in the resignation speech by the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames that he wished Britain to have an independent central bank? Is it not extraordinary that the two previous Chancellors have taken that view, but that they have been prepared to say so only after they have resigned? I have described what the nation wants from the Government but, unhappily, we have a Government who will provide none of those things. Frankly, the sooner they leave us, the better.

5.34 pm

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): The motion makes no reference to the size of the deficit. However, the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) quite properly identified the deficit as the subject that will give rise to growing political debate and differentiation between our approaches to economic problems over the remainder of this Parliament. As he has discovered, it is a topic on which one enters with some trepidation, as there is a natural desire for quantification which may take the general principles rather further than political prudence suggests. However, unless we are prepared to do that, this will be a missed opportunity.

At this stage of a Parliament, the existence of a borrowing requirement of such magnitude is bound to cause a reconsideration of what has been traditional in time-honoured policies. The Leader of the Opposition—I regret that he has departed, but he will miss little—said that we needed a wholly new start in economic policies.

I see that my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) is present. I say to her and to others in the distinguished company in which we move, to our mutual satisfaction, that that view could be called "fresh start". That of course is exactly what impinges on our national political debate.

We have had a fresh start in the area of Community affairs, and we are obliged to have a fresh start as the House attends to the very difficult problems of how one closes that £50 billion gap. The Government have sought to give us a gentle introduction to the task by publishing their own forecast on how the borrowing requirement may be reduced. I realise that it does not carry the significance of a committed plan, but it is a working guideline published in the 1992 "Financial Statement and Budget Report".

It shows the current deficit of £50 billion dropping by £6 billion in the first year, and by £5 billion and £4 billion in the two years thereafter. I do not believe that that fall is anything like fast enough. I do not think that it is satisfactory, given that we are seeking a balanced and healthy management of our domestic economy.

I hesitate to offer my alternative model, but I hope that, by the end of 1996, that figure will have dropped from £50 billion to about £15 billion to £20 billion. That is a formidable undertaking.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Biffen: I see that I have the nodding acquiesence of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown). I think that he would agree that it is none the less a realistic target if the political will is there.

It is important to understand how the deficit arose, and to do so calmly. The early parts of these debates are great spectator events, but now it is a rather tedious show. However, there was very little contribution in the early exchanges to the debate about the real nature of our problems. Of course the recession has been a major factor in the deficit. Nobody can say with much precision the extent to which it has been a factor, but I accept that it could be well over 50 per cent.

However, there is an underlying thrust in public spending in respect of welfare. It is really a demographic consideration. The population at work are a declining percentage, and the population who are on benefits are a growing percentage. That carries the most profound implications for public spending and for the extent to which current public expenditure will crowd out capital public spending, which is the first charge on our economy.

Let us think about the exchanges between those on the Government and Opposition Front Benches earlier this afternoon. In the current circumstances, it is almost impossible to have a constructive and intelligent debate about how we shall try to fashion our future welfare commitment.

I have some mild hope that, when Gordon Borrie produces a report, sooner or later politicians can sit round and consider the funding and commitments in respect of publicly financed welfare, as was the case in the 1950s and onwards, when there was consensus between those on the

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two Front Benches and between the major elements of the two significant parties about the financing and objectives of defence policies.

In terms of public spending, until we can agree to some parameters for welfare spending, that vital sector will remain undetermined and, to some extent, always subject to those who will play a short-term card in the hope of gaining a modest advantage in bidding for the vote of welfare recipients.

I do not have much optimism about the outcome of the current considerations of welfare expenditure and the massive review that is being conducted by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. I was impressed by the orchestration of the great campaign. I have read all the heartache stories in the newspapers—but the policies were all put to me when I was Chief Secretary and the process was conducted in a miserable, subterranean fashion. I was not seeking to become a high profile politician.

The conclusion that I have drawn is that, whatever economies are secured by the Government—I wish my right hon. Friends in the Treasury every success—they will be modest in the context of the magnitude of the present borrowing requirement.

Therefore, I inevitably turn to a consideration of the revenue. My right hon. Friend the previous Chancellor showed great fortitude in seeking a substantial increase in revenue through the extension of value added tax. Ultimately, there is no way that my right hon. and hon. Friends or, indeed, Opposition Members, can avert their eyes from the challenge of what to do about income tax.

The revenue required to meet such a deficit means that we cannot conceivably exclude the role of income tax in closing the gap. That is true not merely in the practical terms of the money needed but, more importantly, because I do not believe that we can exclude income tax in terms of the perceived equity. We cannot go to the public of this country with a policy of increasing taxation in order to undertake the essential task of reducing the borrowing requirement and say that we have excluded income tax.

Over the past decade or so, we have paid some penalties in concentrating our fiscal policy so overwhelmingly on reducing income tax. We have done so to the detriment of the other factors in the totality of taxation. We must clarify the concept—we shall require an increase in the standard rate and in the top rate of taxation.

I understand why the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) became coy about book-keeping. I have the same innate diffidence—I do not know how I have survived so far and not become a Liberal. I simply do not believe that the sums needed can be achieved in the lifetime of this Parliament without thinking in terms of at least an extra 2p on the standard and top rate of income tax.

Mr. Tim Smith: I am sure that my right hon. Friend is aware that the figures in the Red Book for 1995-96 show that, of the tax increases proposed of £10·6 billion, about £8 billion will be increases in income tax. That is a substantial increase, and to increase the standard rate by 2p in the pound would produce only another £4 billion. Therefore, I think that the Government have the balance about right.

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor will be pleased to have the assistance of my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith), which makes my right hon. and learned Friend appear as a moderate against my own left-wing extremism.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): My right hon. Friend has made a statement which has important implications, not merely for the conduct of our economic affairs, but for the debate between the so-called left and the so-called right inside the Conservative party. My conversations in recent weeks with Conservatives in my constituency, which my right hon. Friend knows well, have revealed that Conservatives—both retired and employed—would give the measure considerable support.

Mr. Biffen: The prospect of my becoming a folk hero among Tory activists is not a career move that I sought in the autumn of my days.

I have tried in general terms to sketch what I believe our policy objectives should be when dealing with the budget deficit. There is also the question of how to present those policies. My right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont) made a memorable resignation speech, which identified the difficulties that arise when there is no close and intimate understanding between Chancellor and Prime Minister—as Baroness Thatcher found with both Lord Howe and Lord Lawson.

I regret that my right hon. Friend is no longer able to serve the Administration, and hope that he will have the same experience as Selwyn Lloyd and return to high office at a future date.

My right hon. and learned Friend the new Chancellor clearly holds great fascination for the media. The number of times that I have been asked to comment on his hush puppies and other aspects of his sartorial and theological commitment are beyond belief—he is a cottage industry. However, that will pass, and my right hon. and learned Friend will be left with the problem of how to conduct a policy which I have elaborated and which I believe will be profoundly unpopular.

Even after allowing for the impact of economic revival, my right hon. and learned Friend has been given the task of introducing a substantial increase in taxation and trimming public expenditure that will affect expectations. One of the most challenging tasks for a Chancellor in today's circumstances is to adjust expectations. We are distant from the politics of growth and easy redistribution. The more demanding challenge, which we now face, is to have to learn, in national accounting terms, to live within our means. That task now faces the Administration and the Chancellor.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor has a good-natured approach to politics—he is of the Ronnie Scott tendency. It is a delicate point to put to him, but I am not sure whether his approach is quite right in the present circumstances. My views are drawn straight from the pantheon of Euro-scepticism—that will not cause my right hon. and learned Friend any difficulty, as he has shown great elasticity over European issues.

In the late 1950s, when, De Gaulle came to office and had Antoine Pinay as his finance minister, he was in a similar position to that of my right hon. and learned Friend. National finances were out of kilter, and many established practices had to be challenged. The policy

slogan—one might say, "word bite" had the phrase existed in those days—was "vérité et sévérité"—truth and discipline. In the spirit of fresh start, I do not think that it would do the Government any harm to consider the economic problems that lie ahead in those terms.

5.48 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): One factor has become clear during the debate: one of the problems facing the country is that it is led by a man who is visibly incapable of carrying out the office that he now holds—a man who does not sound, look or behave like a Prime Minister. The first few passages of his speech this afternoon contained the most demeaning stuff that I have heard from a Prime Minister in my 28 or 29 years in the House.

I thought that the Prime Minister's speech last week, in which he said, "I am here, I am well and I am staying," hit about rock bottom. When Prime Ministers talk about staying, it means that at the back of their mind is the idea of going. I thought that we had plumbed the depths, but the Prime Minister reached the nadir today, in what passed for political banter, in the opening and closing passages of his speech. The Prime Minister is now a problem for the nation, but at least that problem will not be with us for much longer.

I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) on his choice of subject for today's debate. I am second to none in my belief that the Labour party must and will win the next election on the merits of its policies, but the fact that we must fight and win on the merits of our policies is no reason not to remind the general public that, while we shall win next time on our merits, the Conservative party won last time on a calculated deception. The Conservative party made claims and promises which it must have known at the time could not and would not be fulfilled.

This charge of calculated deception has, to a large extent, been endorsed today by the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), whose criticism of Government action—a willingness to put public opinion polls before the national interest, a concern for short-term political advantage at the expense of the nation's welfare —is exactly the charge that the Opposition motion levels at the Government today.

Although he may well deny this, the right hon. sea-green incorruptible Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) said very much the same. He pointed out that there may have been an over-reliance on reductions in direct rates of taxation. We all know why that was. It was not a matter of economic judgment: it was an attempt to buy votes, and it was successful during the election of 1987. But the attempt proved disastrous for the economic welfare of this country.

One reason why I am delighted that we have pursued the point made today so eloquently by my right hon. and learned Friend is the fact that the deception of the last election was not an isolated event or single aberration. Indeed, deception at election times has been a course of conduct with the Conservative party—a way of life. We can see this in every election since 1979.

I remind the Prime Minister that the 1992 manifesto promised to continue to protect the value of the pension against price rises

"as we have for the last 13 years".

That was a commitment to continue a previous breach of faith, for the 1979 manifesto had said:

"We will honour the increases in retirement pensions which were promised just before the election".

That was a promise to increase pensions in line with inflation and in line with average earnings. The second half of that promise was wilfully and cynically broken. with disastrous consequences for pensioners who live on the basic pension alone.

When the Government came to power, the basic pension was about 20 per cent. of average earnings. Last year, it was 15 per cent. of national earnings, yet the 1992 manifesto talked glibly about helping those who need help most. Had it been honest about Conservative attitudes to the poorest pensioners, it would have said, "We shall continue to neglect men and women who rely on the basic pension." In fact, the manifesto read:

"We shall continue to care for those in need"

That was a lie, as the figures eloquently and tragically show.

Over 14 years of Conservative government, the poorest members of society have grown increasingly poor compared with the richest. This Tory Government have the best record of redistribution in the history of British politics; they have consistently taken from the poor and given to the rich. That is bad enough, but the poorest 10 per cent. have actually become poorer in absolute terms during 14 years of Conservatism. They are 6 per cent. poorer now than they were when the Labour party left office—6 per cent. less purchasing power is in the possession of the poorest people in Great Britain. Yet the manifesto speaks of continuing to help those who need help most.

So much for a Government who promised that general prosperity would trickle down and ensure that the poorest were helped—as long as the richest were allowed to flood ahead. Quite the opposite has happened, but this has been the strategy of Conservative party election decisions—a calculated decision not to help those who will not vote Conservative, but to focus help and attention on the voters whom the Tories want to muster to make up their 40 or 45 per cent. of the vote. All that matters to them is returning to power, no matter how cynically or unscrupulously, and no matter how much damage is caused to the people who most need the Government's help.

The facts of the Government's perfidy are beyond dispute. My right hon. and learned Friend set them out eloquently earlier today; other speakers will do the same, offering more and more examples of differences between promise and performance.

The most interesting question is: why have the Government done this so consistently and consciously over the past 13 years? Part of the answer is ministerial incompetence, which the Prime Minister acknowledged when he sacked the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Of course, that has not done the Government's standing any good. When the audience do not like the tune, it is no good the organ grinder sacking the monkey—he has to go himself. If the Prime Minister does not understand that, he does not understand the first rule of politics.

Incompetence is not the only reason. Another is a kind of arrogance combined with cynicism, the belief that the Tory party was born to rule and that any unscrupulous measures are justified to ensure a continuation of that condition. The cynicism comes from knowing that the Tory party can tell lies on election day, can break its

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promises the week afterwards and then the Tory tabloids will not exploit and expose Tory perfidy as they would that of any other party.

I know that the Prime Minister is putting it about that he is hurt and angry because of the way he has been treated by Conservative newspapers. I hope that it will be some consolation to him to consider how the Conservative newspapers would have treated a Labour Government who had presided over the two-year shambles that has passed for an Administration for this country. I believe that *The Sun*, the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mail* would have said things about a Labour Government which are undreamt of in the Prime Minister's limited vocabulary. If he feels that he has had a rough time, let him congratulate himself on the fact that a biased and corrupt Tory newspaper system is prepared to support him in a way that it would support no one else.

But the most important reason why the Tory party has consciously and consistently broken its promises is much more fundamental than the shortcomings of Ministers or the cynicism of politicians. The whole idea on which the Tory management of the economy is based has proved to be wrong. Let us take two or three election examples. The election of 1987 heralded a new dawn of economic success, by two simple economic means of ensuring increased prosperity: 2p off the standard rate of tax, and the deregulation of credit institutions. Then the country was to be floated off on a boom led by consumer spending. This is orthodox, short-term, inchoate Conservative economics.

Of course, the country was plunged into crisis by a boom in credit, which produced the worst trade deficit in our history and resulted in the record interest rates from which we are still suffering. The ideal was wrong, the principle was wrong and the theory was wrong.

I believe that some of the less intellectual members of the 1922 Committee think that by deregulation, by the Government holding back and playing no part in the promotion of industrial activity and having no concern for regional policy, and by neglecting training, this country can become prosperous in a Haitian sort of way—by becoming a low-skilled, low-earning, unregulated, laissez-faire economy. It cannot be done. If the Prime Minister does not realise that, all the suffering of the past 14 years and all the recurring economic crises have been for nothing.

Preposterously, the same principle now applies across a whole range of policy. For my sins, I sat through an education debate in the House a few weeks ago in which Tory Members, apparently with conviction, said that competition works in everything else, so it will work in education. Competition has been seen to fail in industry after industry, and the idea that it will solve our education problems is dogmatic nonsense.

Everyone in this country who knows anything about education realises that the way to improve the literacy of people leaving school at 16 is to ensure that they have all had one or two years of nursery education at the other end of their school careers. That is a simple, well-known principle. But instead of concentrating resources on nursery education, the Government are prepared to let Britain lie at the bottom of the European table for availability of nursery places and to pursue some doctrinaire nonsense about comparisons between schools which will allow head teachers to compete with each other.

I repeat that the whole idea is wrong. Even those few members of the Government who might have wanted to keep their promises could not have done so, because their policies are built on philosophical sand. They are trying to build policies on a half-understood idea—Adam Smith advocated by people who have never read him or who cannot understand him and do not realise that those simple precepts do not apply to the sophisticated world of 1993.

We in the Opposition must remember that, whatever the changes in the Treasury and whoever succeeds the Prime Minister, the idea will still be wrong and the mistakes will still be made. There is no intellectual or political recovery for the Government because their entire policy is based on a misconception. The knowledge that our idea is day by day gradually being proved right will surely sustain us to the next general election and enable us to win on our policies and on the merits of what we propose.

6 pm

Sir Terence Higgins (Worthing): The tone of the debate was set by the Leader of the Opposition. The matters that we are debating are of tremendous importance to all our constituents because their prosperity and welfare depend on the solution to the problems of economic management that face us. The Leader of the Opposition is totally incapable of dealing seriously with these matters, and trivialised them throughout his speech. Those who have suffered throughout the recession from which we are now emerging will not have regarded his speech as amusing. When he sought to deal with the problems, he made no attempt whatever to analyse them.

Since the right hon. and learned Gentleman's speech, the tone of the debate has improved somewhat, and I should like to deal with some serious issues.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont) rightly identified the root cause of our present problems as the over-stimulation of the economy following the stock exchange crash of 1987 and the need to control the subsequent inflation. Throughout the world, and certainly in the Treasury, there was a misunderstanding of the underlying economic situation at that time. The Opposition and the Liberal Democrats advocated far more stimulus than that in which the Government engaged.

The question that arose was how best to reduce inflation, and it is worrying that it has taken such a long time to do that. My right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames spoke about the exchange rate mechanism. If the then Chancellor, now the Prime Minister, had telephoned me the night that he was thinking of joining the ERM and asked about the least painful method of getting back on course—in fact, he did telephone me—and if I had had total foresight and had known the best way to do that, I would have told him to join at the prevailing rate and to withdraw from the ERM in about September 1992.

Any other way to reduce inflation, as we did, would have been even more painful. Had we sought to reduce it to the extent that we did through general deflation, the effect on the economy would have been far more

traumatic, as my right hon. Friend the former Chancellor said. In any event, it is doubtful that we would have had the resolution to do that.

I am firmly convinced that the so-called fault lines in the ERM are so fundamental that it would not be appropriate for us to consider rejoining the ERM in the foreseeable future. The basic fault line in the system is the fact that an independent central bank in Germany is preoccupied with reducing inflation and is concerned only with German interests and not with the overall economic situation in Europe or the world.

While that situation persists, it would be inappropriate for more than a small number of countries even to consider joining the ERM. A move towards a European central bank would not provide a solution because the tensions that would confront it as a result of a lack of economic convergence in the Community would be too great for it to deal with.

In his resignation speech, my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames spoke about the need for an independent central bank in Britain. However, for the reasons set out by the Prime Minister, that would be wrong. It is a little paradoxical for my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames to say that we need an independent central bank to control inflation when, without such a bank, we have reduced inflation to its lowest level for about 30 years.

I shall concentrate on the more important issues of the future. In economics, timing is absolutely crucial. I am worried that we are in danger of making more fundamental mistakes. As always, I listened with great pleasure to my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), who did not touch on timing but concentrated on the deficit. The recovery is still fragile and there is a danger that if action to bring the deficit under control is taken too rapidly the recession will be prolonged, the recovery will be aborted and the deficit may be increased rather than decreased.

It is perhaps ironic that, at a time when we are about to move by way of the proposals for a unified Budget to a Budget more closely resembling that of a household, we are in danger of adopting a Keynesian relic or the fallacy that what is right for the individual in recession is right for the Government. An individual should rightly tighten his belt when he falls on hard times, but that is not the appropriate procedure for the economy as a whole.

The idea of a significant fiscal deficit is not at all inappropriate at present. We must wait until the cyclical factors begin to take effect. If we seek to take action on the deficit before that happens, an effective recovery may take a long time. No one knows how much of the deficit is structural and how much is cyclical. There have been some recent analytical studies, and I have one here by Greenwell Montagu.

It is important to ascertain that, but the Red Book contains a number of estimates showing that the deficit is declining, even under the relatively slow rates of projected economic growth, and that it is significantly below the round, headline figure of £50 billion which has been bandied about.

My plea to the Chancellor is to consider carefully the importance of the timing for getting us out of the recession and for controlling inflation. The issue is not about the size of the deficit but about whether it is funded. One of the curiosities of the last Budget was a sudden sleight of hand by the then Chancellor who, having said that there was a full funding rule, which everyone had always supposed meant fully funded from sources other than the banks, suddenly said that some of it would be funded from the banks and that that would now be called full funding.

That has never been understood by that expression. The question is whether the present deficit can be fully funded in the original sense. My own feeling is that it should be possible to do so at prevailing interest rates. I shall not go into the nitty-gritty of the yield curve, but it should be possible to fund it to a very large extent.

The present trends in money supply figures should not give us too much cause for concern at this stage in the cycle. Although it may not be possible to fund it fully, I am rather doubtful about the case for further cuts in interest rates, not least because it is becoming increasingly apparent that further cuts in interest rates by the Government are likely to be passed on only to a very small extent, if at all, by those lending to industry or to consumers.

Therefore, the incoming Chancellor, in balancing those difficult equations, will need to take into account whether it is possible to cut interest rates, given the need to fund the deficit and maintain the overall economic balance.

I want to mention two other ways in which the deficit might be controlled—public expenditure and taxation. My right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North referred to each of them. I have always thought that there was a considerable case for a Budget purdah in regard to taxation. Now that we are to bring together the two sides of the equation, there is a strong case for extending that purdah to public expenditure.

It is appropriate to say that we are carrying out a general review of public expenditure. Rumours may then circulate and be stimulated by the Opposition as to what particular cuts might be envisaged, but it is tremendously important for Ministers, particularly Treasury Ministers, not to refer to any of those possibilities.

It is not just a matter of sub-post offices, pharmacists, prescription charges or pensions. The concern that has been stirred up by the Opposition and, in particular by the press has caused real and genuine concern about issues which had not been decided. Rumour after rumour has been presented on the newspaper placards and elsewhere as fact when no decisions have been taken.

It is therefore tremendously important that Ministers should adopt a stance of purdah in regard to taxation and to public expenditure. We are in danger of taking action to protect those below the benefit level while disregarding those just above it.

I hope that the new Chancellor will look again at the papers in the Treasury on the proposals for a tax credit scheme. We considered such a scheme way back in the 1970s and we were about to legislate in the following Budget, but we lost the election to the Labour party. It was frustrated by a combination of Joel Barnett and Barbara Castle when they came into office.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): I had the privilege of serving on the tax credit Select Committee. We were very much in favour of it and it would have been simple to implement such a scheme then before the figures became too astronomic. We were fully committed to bringing it in, and it was a disaster that the Labour Government put it to one side.

Sir Terence Higgins: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's endorsement, because the idea is certainly worth looking at again in the context of the relationship between benefits and taxation.

Public expenditure is not normally an appropriate means of regulating the cycle. What we want is what we have—a public expenditure plan over a number of years. Subject to my earlier point about timing, that needs to be taken into account, but it is not an effective method of cyclical regulation.

The tax system is more appropriate, but any proposal should to be related to rates and not to structure. It is a mistake to alter the structure of taxation for short-term management reasons. That is one reason why I believe that the extension of VAT to fuel is not an appropriate solution. I should have preferred a straight change on rates, not least because it is reversible whereas, because of pressure from the European Community, eroding the zero rate base of VAT is not reversible because the Community would not allow it.

The Treasury Select Committee said that it believed that the recession would be longer and deeper than anyone else supposed, and it was right. We based our argument on the fact that forecasters invariably underestimate turning points. Whether the economy is going up and then coming down into recession or going down and then recovering, in every cycle since the war the errors have been bigger.

We were clearly at a turning point, and we said that the recession would be longer and deeper than anyone supposed, and we were right. The record shows there to be a degree of symmetry in the strength of the subsequent recovery. We must all hope that that is so, but I have two worries. We do not know how much our existing industrial and other capacity has been eliminated during this very long recession, and I am concerned that the banking system, which has eroded its own capital base to a large extent by a series of unfortunate errors, may not be able adequately to finance the recovery.

We need to consider carefully what might be done to help because, although we all know that companies go bust in a recession, companies often go bust as the recovery begins because they run out of working capital. I hope that my right hon. Friend will look at the banking system.

I conclude by wishing my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor well in his new high office. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames said, we have managed to get down inflation, which was absolutely crucial for a prolonged and successful recovery. In many respects, the economy is in good shape and a recovery is possible. The new Chancellor is a graduate of Gonville and Caius college, Cambridge, my own college. The late Iain Macleod was the last Chancellor to come from that college.

As far as the future of the country is concerned, the basic stance which was taken by Iain Macleod, combining tough economic policy with compassion for those most in need, formed a firm basis for the Conservative party. I very much hope that the new Chancellor will bear that in mind when he makes the immensely difficult decisions which will have to be made to get the economy going again and to achieve a successful and prolonged recovery.

6.13 pm

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): This day and this debate have acquired a significance that none of us had envisaged. We did not know about the dramatic events earlier today, but they form an essential part of the debate. I do not say this with any particular relish, and certainly not with malice, but we have seen the disintegration of a Prime Minister. We are witnessing also the disintegration of the Government and of a regime and of an ideology that sustained that regime over many years. When people look back on this day, they will identify it as the moment when that became clear to everyone.

The remarks of the former Chancellor of the Exchequer met a resonse from the Prime Minister that essentially confirmed everything that the former Chancellor said. The Prime Minister paid tribute to the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont) for his outstanding achievement, but said that he had had to go because the polls made that necessary. One has never known a more lamentable statement from a Prime Minister. It is a total abdication of leadership. I say that not with any malice but with a good deal of sorrow in many respects.

The motion refers to promises broken, but the promises that the Government kept are more fundamentally worrying. When the present regime began in the late 1970s —this is germane to the remarks of the right hon. Member for Worthing (Sir T. Higgins), who mentioned Iain Macleod and his times—the Conservative party, untypically in the modern period, fell into the grip of a theory or ideology which has sustained it ever since, and which has brought that party and this country to the present travail and shambles.

That theory required a number of actions. They included cutting direct taxation, to stimulate a great flowering of innovation, invention and enterprise; rolling back the state, by privatising where that could be done; and dismantling the trade unions, because they were said to be the key to industrial decline.

There were other parts of the story. Sir Keith Joseph, the man with the perennial frown—for whom I had a good deal of regard and respect—worried away at other problems. He went around assuring us that crime was derivative of socialism, and that socialism corroded moral fibre. He said that, if only socialism could be corrected, crime would be overcome. He argued also that, if only one could do away with the dreadful socialists, there would be a great revival of the family and of family life. The whole set of ideas advanced at that time sustained the programme that followed.

Never since 1945 have a Government so meticulously done, from 1979, the things that they said they would do. They have stuffed the trade unions, privatised wherever they could, and eroded the basis of direct taxation. The Government have done everything they said had to be done to reverse the historic decline in the British economy and to regenerate society. The problem is that it has not worked, but has produced the present shambles.

I will not detain the House with the figures, but it will be aware of the condition of British manufacturing industry, our share of world exports in manufactured goods over the past 20 years, the state of family life, and the crime rate. We are now experiencing the consequences of the Government's ideology and of the promises that they have kept.

No longer can the Conservative party claim that it is the party of economic management, sound money and low taxes. Right up until the last general election, many people still believed that it was—but the party of sound money now presides over the biggest hole in public finances that anyone can remember.

What is to be done? As we heard today, and as we hear every day, the Government are adrift. They do not know how to respond, because their ideology has not prepared them for the present situation. The danger is that many in the Government's ranks, faced with that hole in public finances, see the possibility of eroding the post-1945 welfare state not as a desperate necessity, but as another opportunity. Using the argument that public finances demand this, the Government can launch another assault against the welfare system, which would be morally reprehensible.

I remind the House of the remark by the late Richard Titmuss, that services for the poor end up being poor services. If one undermines the principle of universality, one creates ghetto services for poor people and erodes the basis of the system.

Different population groups are classified as C1s, C2s, and so on. I suggest that we shall soon be hearing about another category, whom I shall call the just-abovers. They are a powerful group of people—those who are just above the level at which benefits are paid and who, as they see it, get nothing out of the system. If certain Conservative Members are serious about some of the public finance changes that they talk about, they will hit the just-abovers very seriously—and there are lots of just-abovers in places such as Christchurch. I warn Conservative Members against going down that path.

There are serious arguments to be made about the means of financing the welfare system. We are having them on this side of the House, and Conservative Members, in their antique way, are having similar arguments. However, our commitment is rather different. We must do all in our power to maintain the integrity of the welfare system, and hold seriously to our views on social housing, poverty and inequality.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) reminded the House that greater inequality makes certain things happen. We now have more inequality. The Government said that no one should worry about such things as social justice, because they were just Labour hang-ups—and if only they were forgotten about, there would be prosperity and tranquillity. That has not happened. So we have an immediate serious problem about welfare to address. The Labour party perhaps burnt its fingers at the last election by trying to talk honestly about tax and telling people that, if they wanted services, they had to pay for them—a fairly direct message—and we know what happened as a result.

Now, it is not us but others who are telling some of the truth. A report produced this week by the City brokers Greenwell Montagu says that the tax burden has sunk to a 15-year low as a result of what they call

"over-aggressive tax cutting in the 1980s".

It argues that the real revenue prize for the Chancellor is the £100 billion of tax allowances and exemptions. They include the generous tax shelters which allow companies to reduce corporation tax bills, and tax relief on mortgages.

There is a pot there that can be used. There are choices to be made in the short term about how to fund this hole in the public finances, and different approaches to it. The Opposition must be fairly robust in arguing for our values as we approach that.

There is a larger choice, too. The choice that opened up in the late 1970s—which has sustained this Government ever since—is now disintegrating. There is a short-term choice of how to finance the deficit and another choice of a completely different sort of direction for the economy and society—one that has far more to do with the values of community, partnership and decency than we have known in the past 14 years. I think that people are ready for that different approach; the tragedy is that the Government are blocking it.

6.31 pm

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright) seems to have a very favourable view of what took place in the 1970s. My recollection is somewhat different. He seems to regret that many of the nationalised industries have been privatised, that action has been taken to reform the trade unions, and even that taxation has been reduced. My recollection of the 1970s is that we did indeed live in times of severely nationalised industries and total control of the Government by the trade unions. I remember a White Paper produced by Dame Barbara Castle, called "In Place of Strife", which had to be withdrawn.

I also recollect that there was an even larger deficit. I am the first to complain about the size of the Government's deficit, but there was an even larger deficit under the Labour Government in the 1970s, which then stood at 9 per cent. of GDP. The International Monetary Fund then came in, the Government had to write a letter of intent to Dr. Johannes Witteveen, and capital spending in the public sector was cut by 23 per cent. in every way. I am not talking about reductions of growth, but about actual capital reductions. There was the highest rate of taxation, both personal and on companies, and that was enough to ensure that Labour was defeated, at that time and ever since.

The electorate are no fools; they will not easily forget what happened then. When they see that the Labour party is still in hock to the trade unions, with John Edmonds dictating to the Leader of the Opposition what policy he should have, I must tell the Opposition that they are, frankly, unelectable.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), the former Chancellor, made a very interesting personal statement, which I commend. He made the interesting point that he had argued for an independent central bank. I have been on about this for some time. If I understand my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister correctly—if his only objection concerns parliamentary accountability—I think that this is something we can press forward with.

As the House knows, the Federal Reserve Board in the United States is accountable, in the sense that it gives an account of itself to the appropriate Senate committees. I do not know what the appropriate committee here would be; I suppose it could be the Treasury Select Committee. I can think of some improvements that I would wish to make to that Committee but, regardless of that, I think that it, or some such body, would be a suitable

[Sir Peter Hordern]

organisation to which the governor of the central bank could give evidence. In fact, he already gives evidence to the Treasury Select Committee.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames and Lord Lawson, both former Chancellors, have said that our anti-inflation policy would be more credible with an independent central bank. I have advocated that for a long time, and I hope that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will consider the matter.

Sir Terence Higgins: My right hon. Friend must also consider how, in such circumstances, we would co-ordinate fiscal and monetary policy.

Sir Peter Hordern: In exactly the same way as it is co-ordinated in the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany, where the independent central bank is given a responsibility to control inflation. For that reason, it is totally in control of interest rates.

It would be desirable, as my right hon. Friend says, for them to be closely co-ordinated. It is by no means possible, either in Germany or the United States, but I maintain that it is a better position than the one we have here. Monetary policy is not as credible as it might be if the central bank were independent. An independent central bank's position would be very much easier if there were not such a large deficit. I think that my right hon. Friend would agree that monetary policy cannot be conducted with such a large deficit. I will come to that, in a moment.

My right hon. Friend referred to the independence of the central bank and the ERM, as did my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Some people think that our membership of the ERM is all we need to explain our present difficulties. They look back to a golden age, before we entered the ERM, and say that entry of the ERM was the cause of our problems. But, as my right hon. Friend said, the root of our difficulties was the surge in credit in the late 1980s.

The Government did not stand idly by at that time. Interest rates had been as high as 15 per cent. for a year before we joined the ERM in October 1990, and for most of the year before that they had been up to 14 per cent. Interest rates were reduced by 1 per cent. on the day we joined the ERM, so there is no question of having an easy time before. It was nothing of the kind. Interest rates cannot be at 15 per cent. for a year without slowing down the economy. That is what it was intended to, and did, achieve.

Inflation was 10 per cent. when we joined the ERM, and it is now less than 2 per cent. In the late 1980s, we went on a spending spree with borrowed money, and we are still paying the bill. We shall go on paying the bill, in my opinion, for some time to come.

It is not surprising that the Government are unpopular in the country. We were not popular after Lord Howe's Budget in 1981—I remember the same kind of scenes as we have seen in the House today after that Budget—but I remind the Opposition that we won the 1983 election with a majority of well over 100. The recovery that we are now seeing in better unemployment figures, improved investment and greater company and consumer confidence will continue. Inflation is at its lowest level for many years, as are interest rates. We have the right ingredients for sustained economic growth.

Some economic forecasters and commentators say that we should cut interest rates still further, and allow sterling to fall against other currencies. It is extraordinary how often in the economic cycle there is pressure to inflate the economy at a time when there are clear signs of recovery. Exactly the same happened in 1972, when the Government were persuaded to execute a U-turn and print money. It was wrong then, and would be now.

In those days—I have been a monetarist since 1966—to be right-wing was to oppose printing money, and to oppose prices and incomes policies. To be right-wing nowadays is to cut interest rates to the point of invisibility, and do everything possible to sink sterling. If any policy is more calculated to cause inflation, I do not know of it. After all that the country has been through, it would be criminal to throw away all the progress that has been made after such necessary sacrifices and pain.

The sacrifices and pain have fallen on the private sector. There has been no similar restraint in the public sector, with the commendable exception of public sector wages. As a result, we are due to borrow £50 billion this year, which is simply too much. If we must have value added tax on fuel and power, we might as well have it at once. To be blamed for imposing VAT on fuel and power without getting any revenue for a year seems perverse.

I can understand why economic forecasters believe that it would be better to inflict VAT on fuel and power when the economy is growing faster, but it is a great mistake to try to finesse the situation on clever City forecasters' advice. As for putting their advice in the Red Book—I hope that my right hon. Friend will see that this does not happen again—that is carrying attention to the views of these people to the point of adulation.

The ancient Greeks had a good way of dealing with forecasters. If an oracle got it wrong, he was dragged out of his cave and stoned and his bones were left to bleach in the sun. So it should be with these oracles.

I can tell my right hon. Friend what impresses the City. It is £50 billion. It is far too high, both as a figure in itself and in the scope that it gives for markets to make things difficult for the Government. After all, we had a public sector surplus of 3 per cent. of gross domestic product only four years ago. It is the pace of decline that is so alarming. So we need to see some positive signs of addressing this deficit quite soon.

Some favour cutting the growth in public spending, and others favour increasing revenue. Incidentally, the speech of the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) this afternoon was utterly disgraceful. To talk of great matters of principle and of the need to raise taxes, without giving a single idea of any figure, was cynicism of the worst possible kind.

Cutting growth of public spending and increasing revenue are both in order. We have a higher proportion of public spending as a proportion of GDP at 45·5 per cent. than under the last Government of 1979-80, when it was 44 per cent. So what is to be done? There are always scare stories from Departments at this time of year, but it is the Treasury's duty to investigate savings and efficiency in Departments.

I have often wondered why there are so many civil servants in the Ministry of Defence. Come to that, why are there so many admirals and generals? Why has so little attempt been made to release Minstry of Defence

property, much of it unoccupied for over a year? There are still substantial savings to be made at the Ministry of Defence, particularly in the procurement programme.

Since district health authorities are now simply purchasing authorities, why do we not cut out two thirds of them by amalgamating them into new single authorities and cut out regional health authorities altogether? What is the point of them?

We shall have a problem in the next century, with more people living longer and fewer people to support them. I know that the Labour party is looking at this matter with great care. We also need a national insurance system which is properly funded. Why do we not therefore abolish the upper earnings limit and have a graduated scheme against which contributors could make separate provision for all kinds of benefit outside and in addition to the state sector? We need to encourage people to provide for themselves in sickness and in old age, over and above what the state can do.

There is a case for increasing the rate of corporation tax. If capital gains tax were reduced, the yield would increase substantially and the assets themselves be put to better use.

I wish my right hon. and learned Friend well in the difficult task that lies before him. There are no easy solutions. We must remember that we cannot be immune from the pressures of the world economy. The best that we can do is get ourselves into a competitive position and remain there. Low inflation is the key to the low long-term interest rates and sustained economic growth that we all wish to see.

6.43 pm

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): A lot of water has gone under the bridge since 1979, and we should look back to that time and see what has happened since then.

When the former Chancellor, the right, hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), said that it all began in 1988, he was right, because at that time we had a slashing of taxes—not all wrong, by the way, especially with the top rate of tax—and some of the figures, which were staggering then, are even more staggering when we read them now. With that Budget, the richest 1 per cent. were getting away with £30,000 a year less tax than they had paid in 1979—a loss to the Treasury of £8·6 billion in that year. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) said in an intervention not long ago, the accrued sum is £26 billion over the past 10 years. The richest 5 per cent. were saving £9,000 a year under that Budget—a loss to the Treasury of £12·5 billion.

I am trying to put in perspective where the money went and where the recession started. As the ex-Chancellor said, it started there. Yet we were giving sums of money of this size to the richest 5 per cent. and the richest 1 per cent. in the country. Now we hear that there is a loophole in directors' pay. We read that John Birt, the BBC director-general, has been able to have his salary paid through a private company, which means that he does not pay his contributions or his taxes to the Exchequer. That has happened not just with people like Birt; it is happening with a lot of executives. Many directors are having their money paid through private companies and fiddling the taxpayers and the Treasury.

We have had this "fast buck" economy for some years, and during that time the number of jobs in manufacturing industry has fallen from 7·1 million in 1979 to 4·5 million in 1992. That means that manufacturing industry has been halved since this Government came to power. People want to know why the Treasury is not getting enough money. It is because the Government have destroyed half the country's manufacturing industry—and those are the Government's own figures, not mine. The figures can be obtained from the Library.

The United Kingdom trade deficit in manufactured goods will reach £17 million compared with £5·5 billion surplus when the Government came into office. There was a surplus when they came in; now we are £17 billion in the red. That shows the calibre of this Government. At present, the unemployment figure is 3 million or perhaps 4 million. It is 3 million officially, but it is 4 million if we add in the 18 fiddles that the Government have used during their time in office to get the unemployment figures down. One million of those on the dole are under 25—the Government's own figures, not mine.

We have seen the collapse of DAF, with no intervention from the Government. Thousands of jobs in DAF have gone. In the mining industry 15,000 jobs are going. We see 7,000 jobs going in British Aerospace 10,000 jobs in British Shipbuilders and Swan Hunter, 6,000 jobs in Imperial Chemical Industries, 7,500 jobs in Guest, Keen and Nettlefold and 11,000 jobs in the car industry.

We live in a low-wage economy where, because wages are being driven down, the British workers' wages are already 18 per cent. lower than those of their counterparts in France. British workers are 30 per cent. down on their counterparts in the Netherlands and 42 per cent. down on their counterparts in Germany. Their wages have been driven down by the Government year after year. British workers work longer hours than any of their counterparts in Europe, and get fewer holidays than anyone in Europe does.

The Government have a terrible record. Over the years, they have had £100 billion from North sea oil and the sale of the nationalised industries. I shall repeat that, in case the Chief Secretary did not get it: the Government have had £100 billion from North sea oil and the sale of the nationalised industries. That is a colossal amount of money.

What did the Government do with that money? There was the fiasco of the poll tax, to begin with. We have seen what has happened to the poll tax. Time after time the Government were warned about what would happen, but they took no notice of anyone. This Government's attitude is arrogant. They dismiss the views of everyone. Even today the Government display an arrogant attitude towards the health service and education. They will listen to no one.

The Chief Secretary was one of the architects of the poll tax. And what did the poll tax cost the taxpayers? Tory arrogance cost them £19 billion, which amounts to £400 for every man, woman and child. The poll tax should stick round their necks for the rest of their lives. The people of Britain should make sure that they are not allowed to do anything like that again.

What about black Wednesday? Because the Government could not make up their mind, because they were at odds with each other, that one day cost the taxpayer at least £5 billion. The Chancellor and the Prime Minister could not make up their minds about whether to stay in the exchange rate mechanism or to come out of it, so taxpayers lost £5 billion in one day. The Government

[Mr. Ronnie Campbell]

are supposed to be running the economy for the people of this country. I reckon that they are running it for themselves.

What have the Government done to local government in the past few years? They say that local government is not efficient, but if the things that I have just mentioned had been done by local government, either local government would have been surcharged or local government people would have been put in gaol. The Government have taken £23 billion from local government. I do not doubt that, when they sit round the table trying to get rid of the £50 billion deficit, local government will yet again be the target.

One Minister said in the newspapers—he would not be named, so I cannot name him—that local government is an easy option because the Government can cut local government and not get the blame; the local authorities, which are mainly Labour, get the blame for doing the cutting; the Government just withdraw the grants. That is true. I bet that when the Government get round to cutting, local government will be hammered and will be cut to pieces.

The Government are spending £50 billion more than they receive in taxes. Half the country, of course, are fiddling their taxes, just like the executives who, as I said earlier, are paid through private companies and avoid paying their taxes. The Government will have to raise taxes, but they will not tax the rich more—the banks and big business. The poor and working people will be taxed more.

Prescription charges have already been increased by 13 per cent. in one smash go to bolster the health service, which is crumbling before our very eyes. The idea has been put forward that people should pay when they go into hospital and that they should also pay to see their doctor. It is also suggested that people should pay for using our roads. Student fees may go up even more. It is all on the table for the Government to decide. And all of it will be down to the poor, not to the rich. It is time that the Government taxed the rich more instead of taking more money away from the poor. It was not the poor who brought in the poll tax, or the likes of it.

Britain was once the workshop of the world. It has been reduced to an unimportant, third-rate, capitalist power off the shores of Europe. It is a fast-buck economy. Factories are closing, pits are closing and shipyards are being brought to their knees. The Government have closed everything, just like a matchbox or a deck of cards. Millions of people have been thrown out of work, their lives and hopes shattered by the free play of market forces. Mysterious speculators, City gents, members of boards of directors or big monopolies and the banks cheerfully sell millions of pounds to make even more millions of pounds.

There are only two choices. Either we serve the interests of the wealthy and the powerful, or we serve the interests of the millions of workers of this country, as well as the interests of the unemployed, the homeless, the old, and even the middle class. They face ruin under this unjust, outmoded system. There is no third option. The Tory principles are simple: rob the poor and the needy and give to the rich and the greedy.

6.55 pm

Sir Thomas Arnold (Hazel Grove): I join my right hon. and hon. Friends in congratulating the Chancellor of the Exchequer on his appointment, although I wish that the circumstances of his appointment had been somewhat different.

At the opening of this Parliament, the Queen's Speech included the sentence that the Government

"will set policy in the medium term to ensure that the United Kingdom meets the convergence criteria set out in the Maastricht treaty".—[*Official Report*, 6 May 1992; Vol. 207, c. 51.]

I took that to be the economic strategy of the Government at the time. Therefore, I welcome very much indeed the extremely sceptical remarks that the Prime Minister addressed to the House this afternoon on the subject of the exchange rate mechanism and therefore, by extension and implication, some of our responsibilities under the Maastricht treaty.

Later this year the Government will come forward with another Queen's Speech. I hope that at that time they will feel able to restate what was said this afternoon: that there is no intention of going back into the ERM in the foreseeable future. Personally, I should like the Government to go further and to state now, if at all possible—I address this remark specifically to the Chief Secretary since he is sitting on the Treasury Bench—that there will be no attempt to re-enter the ERM during the lifetime of this Parliament. That would, I believe, greatly reassure my right hon. and hon. Friends and would send a signal to the markets and other commentators about the Government's specific intentions.

There is still the suspicion in some quarters that the Government intend to set policy in such a way as to enable us in due course to rejoin the ERM. Although it was helpful and certainly of great use in bringing down inflation, membership of the ERM led to the imposition of conditions and restraints on our economy that ultimately proved unacceptable, not just to the markets but to sentiment in this House.

I do not believe that we can return to the position where the economy is required to answer the demands of policy rather than the other way round. I hope that henceforth the Government's economic strategy will be not to set policy in the medium term by meeting the convergence criteria set out in the Maastricht treaty—the phrase to which I have already referred—but to set about promoting the recovery that I believe is now under way.

The amendment to the Opposition motion begins by saying that the Government

"welcomes the widespread indications of economic recovery in the United Kingdom at a time when many other major economies are in deepening recession".

I agree with that statement. I agree also with my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Sir T. Higgins), who said that the state of the economy remains fragile. Some of the indications are very healthy, but there is still a long way to go. Conditions in the north of England are better in many respects than they are in parts of the south-east and the south-west.

I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will not be put off from promoting a policy for recovery and expansion by too many fears about inflation. I entirely agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) that we must learn from the lessons of the early 1970s and

we must not repeat those mistakes. Nor should we forget that, in the early 1980s, with the development of the medium-term financial strategy, a framework for policy was established that was tailored to the domestic monetary needs of the British economy. That is surely what we should be doing again.

There are some worrying signs that the growth in money and credit has not been as robust as it should be if the recovery is to take firm roots. In terms of both broad money and narrow money—to take two of the Government's indicators, monitoring ranges, targets, or whatever they are called—there have been some signs that perhaps more needs to be done.

It may be sensible for the Government to loosen monetary policy, while seeking to tackle the deficit by tightening fiscal policy. I would see nothing wrong with that. The Budget was not so long ago that we can know for sure how the economy will move as a result of the measures taken at the time, and, should it become apparent later this year that some tightening of fiscal policy is required, I would support that, and I support the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen).

We should not take too much of an ideological view of those matters any more than we should take an ideological view of monetary policy. If it becomes clear that cutting interest rates is a good way of providing some further stimulus, it should be considered. It should, nevertheless, be within a framework that sets out a discipline and the Government's plans for the growth of money in line with the domestic needs of the economy.

It is to that theme that I return in conclusion. The Government must do everything possible during the rest of this Session and in the next Session to ensure that the economy reponds to our domestic needs. They should put aside any thought of re-entering the ERM during the lifetime of this Parliament and should not set policy by the extremely stringent, tough demands of the convergence criteria of the Maastricht treaty because that will not work and will only hinder recovery.

7.2 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): I thought that my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition left the Chamber the victor of this afternoon's debate. He precisely, and often quite humorously, pulverised the Government's record.

The House today heard speeches from the former Chancellor and the Prime Minister. In effect, we may have heard not just one resignation speech but two. I listened to the former Chancellor's resignation speech. I have never heard the word "loyalty" used to such devastating effect —with contempt, with reproach, with anger. He skewered the Prime Minister on that word. It was one of the most dramatic moments that the House has witnessed, even compared with the personal statement made by Lord Howe about the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. I thought that I heard the former Chancellor complain that, in Cabinet and elsewhere, the Prime Minister had bullied him in his work at the Treasury.

The Prime Minister's speech was tragic. Many Labour Members thought that it was a speech of parliamentary suicide which dwelt over-long, and foolishly, on an apprently hypnotic Leader of the Opposition. The parliamentary by-election in the constituency of Christchurch may almost be a plebiscite on the future of the Prime Minister.

The right hon. Gentleman used a boxing metaphor. He may have seen the show at the Mermaid theatre, which is devoted to the life and times of the greatest, Muhammad Ali, whose autograph I once obtained in these precincts on a copy of *Hansard*. Muhammad Ali did go one fight too far. I encountered Ali in the Central Lobby only weeks after his disastrous fight with Larry Holmes and clearly, with the benefit of hindsight, he should not have embarked on that fight. Larry Holmes had once been just his sparring partner. To continue the metaphor, at the Dispatch Box today, we saw a Prime Minister who was not just lethargic and dispirited but, almost by the process of government and leadership, or the need to give that quality, punch-drunk.

I was disappointed at the Prime Minister's comments. I wanted him to say that he believed in the primacy of manufacturing industry. I wanted him to show the House and the nation at large that he had policies and a programme to restore the economic and industrial greatness of our nation. There was not a clue of that, no sign of that and no determination to provide that leadership, that vision and that policy.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell), who made a powerful speech, I ask myself, where has the £100 billion of North sea oil revenue gone? Why was it not invested in manufacturing industry? Why did the steel, chemical and textile industries contract? Why did our collieries and shipyards close? Why are our businesses going bankrupt? Why is our economy coming apart at the seams? Those where the questions that the Prime Minister should have addressed and, albeit in the bear-pit of the Chamber this afternoon, he should have attempted to give the country and hon. Members the answers.

A dilemma has arisen in my constituency and some of my constituents are in a predicament. Corporate Jets, part of British Aerospace, was recently sold. My constituents are perplexed and angry. British Aerospace owned that company until a week ago, and 600 of my constituents who work there awoke one morning last week to find that the production process and, in effect, they themselves had been sold to an American company. British Aerospace is our nation's largest employer, but it decided to sell the executive jet—an aeroplane that can fly the Atlantic and is arguably the best of its kind in the world—to an American competitor. That is symptomatic of what is wrong with Britain's industrial policy.

My constituents want to know whether the President of the Board of Trade knew that British Aerospace was going to sell Corporate Jets, whose great executive jet can beat the competition throughout the world. They want to know whether the Prime Minister knew that Corporate Jets was going to be sold. They want to know whether, as employees of an American company, they have an industrial future and whether they will continue to produce that wonderful aeroplane for more than three years. They look to the Government for a guarantee.

Speeches must, of necessity, be brief. I believe that the nation needs a strong regional policy. It wants investment in manufacturing industry, more apprenticeships and investment in schools and skills training. We need investment in manufacturing industry to sustain what is left of the welfare state. The nation does not want

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dispiriting diversions such as that caused by the Asil Nadir scandal or the cynicism and menace of the Matrix Churchill case. It wants Cabinet leadership which has the nation interest at heart. We have today seen evidence that the Conservative party can no longer give the nation the leadership it needs.

7.10 pm

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): I was most disappointed by the leader of the Opposition's speech. It was a brilliant, witty and humorous speech worthy of the music hall, but it had no real content. The right hon. and learned Gentleman showed himself to be wholly devoid of the necessary attributes one looks for in a Prime Minister. Having admitted that we have a public sector deficit of £50 billion, and when asked whether he would deal with it by reducing public expenditure or increasing taxation, he stood at the Dispatch Box and said that he would deal with it by reducing unemployment.

That is fatuous. If unemployment goes down, the deficit will of course also go down but, even if unemployment were nil, we would still have a deficit because only half of the deficit is due to the recession. The rest is structural. By his answer, the right hon. and learned Gentleman showed that he is barren of ideas and knowledge and wholly incapable of being Prime Minister.

I begin my main speech by saying how sad I was to learn of the previous Chancellor's departure. I worked with him as Chairman of the Back-Bench finance committee, and I am sure that history will be kinder to him than the media and some of his colleagues. He knows that I disagreed with his policy in the summer of last year but since white Wednesday, as I call it, he put in place the right policies for recovery: low interest rates, a competitive pound and low inflation. He had a healthy scepticism for the exchange rate mechanism and, if he were honest, he thought that a single currency was for the birds. He was determined to do all in his power to cut spending and reduce the deficit. His Budgets were innovative and elegant, and he introduced two great reforms which will come to be appreciated in time.

First, our method of devising the Budget always seemed ludicrous. We did not decide how much we had to spend. Instead, every Ministry decided how much it wanted, we added it all up and then decided how we could finance the total. The previous Chancellor changed the system—the Budget will now be worked out from the top down instead from the bottom up.

My right hon. Friend's second innovation was to bring the fixing of taxes and the dealing with public expenditure together at the time of the Budget. That is a first-class reform, which will start this year. It must be a bitter blow that he was not allowed to present it.

The new Chancellor, whom I congratulate on his appointment, faces two very important tasks. The first is to ensure that the recovery which, as some of my hon. Friends have said, is not yet strong—indeed, in some areas it is virtually non-existent or fragile—continues to strengthen. As other European economies go into an even deeper decline, and as the American economy falters, there is a danger that Britain's recovery could slow down.

The new Chancellor should do everything possible to ensure that that does not happen. I suggest that he uses the freedom of a floating pound to lower interest rates as necessary and to slacken the monetary stance. If need be, he should at the same time tighten the fiscal stance, but I shall deal with that in a moment.

My initial worry about the new Chancellor was that, after white Wednesday, he was one of those who wanted to rejoin the ERM at an early date. However, he has recently expressed the view that it is unlikely that we shall rejoin during this Parliament. I hope that it is a real conversion rather than a diplomatic one. I should like to think that it proves that he now supports a floating exchange rate. If he confirms that, many of my colleagues will breathe a sigh of relief.

The second vital task facing the Chancellor is, of course, the reduction of the public deficit which will this year rise to £50 billion—more than 8 per cent. of gross domestic product. If the Chancellor succeeds in his first task of obtaining higher growth, it will go some way to solving the deficit problem. If, however, he fails, and if the recovery grinds to a halt, the deficit will get worse. Even if he is successful, other action will be needed. The big debate in the House and in our party is whether we should reduce the deficit by increasing taxation or reducing public expenditure.

In his last Budget, the former Chancellor presented a package of tax increases worth £10 billion. I must tell the new Chancellor bluntly that he should turn his attention to what I admit is the difficult task of reducing public expenditure and forget any idea of increasing income tax, especially the standard rate.

The Tory party won the election for two basic reasons. First, the British public preferred the Prime Minister to the former Leader of the Opposition. Secondly, they believed that we would take less out of their pay packets than the Labour party, and that Labour was the party of spending and taxation. We should heed the warning of George Bush's experience across the Atlantic. He said, "Watch my lips." The people watched his lips, and he did not do what he had promised. As we know, he lost the election. If we go into the next election with direct tax rates higher than those at the previous election, we shall lose all credibility. We shall be finished, and there will be no significant difference between us and the Labour party.

We are already committed to the proportion of GDP taken by taxes rising from 34·5 per cent. this year to 37 per cent in 1997-98. That compares with only 29 per cent. in the United States and 31 per cent. in Japan and Switzerland. There is no alternative to cutting public expenditure.

I accept that there will be difficulties. I have heard it said that we cannot cut overseas aid because 20 Conservative Back Benchers will not vote for it and that we cannot touch social security because a further 15 would not accept that. Everyone favours cutting Government expenditure in the generality but not in the particular. I must tell my Back-Bench colleagues—I am sorry that there are not more of them here—that cuts will have to be made across the board and everyone's pet service is likely to be affected.

The alternative—there is only one—would be a massive —I stress that word—increase in taxation which many Conservative Members would not stand for and which the country would not accept. When the package is proposed, it must be accepted as a whole. We cannot choose from it a la carte—we cannot allow people to say that they like one part but not another.

The increase in public spending is a major cause of our deficit. I wish to put the matter in context, because many people believe that the deficit was caused mainly by the recession. In the past four years, public sector spending went up by no less than £30 billion in real terms. In the four years to 1991, it went up in real terms by £3 billion. Since 1988-89, public spending increased from 39·25 per cent. of GDP to 45·5 per cent. of GDP this year, an increase of 6·25 per cent.

So much for all those accusations of public expenditure cuts. On those figures the Government could be accused of being profligate. I feel that the Government made a big mistake in not grasping the nettle in the public spending round last year. If they had started earlier, the problem would have begun to be solved earlier.

I shall take a few moments to make suggestions about where savings could be made. It is easy to say, "Cut spending," but not so easy to say where the cuts should be made. During the recession every business in the country has had to cut its costs and slim down its work force. Whole layers of management have been abolished. Barclays bank, for example, has got rid of 6,000 people. But in the bloated public sector no such exercise has taken place; indeed, the number of civil servants is rising.

If we compare the present public sector with the industries that used to be in the public sector but have now been privatised—British Telecom, British Gas, the electricity companies and so on—we see enormous differences. Those privatised industries have cut costs significantly and reduced their labour forces, yet they have increased efficiency. Under British Telecom the telephone service is infinitely better than it used to be, and BT now has 33,000 fewer employees. This year the British Airports Authority has reduced its work force by 19·5 per cent. and PowerGen has reduced its work force by 20 per cent.

If local government—excluding teachers—and the civil service did only half what the private sector has done, billions of pounds would be saved. Indeed, if they reduced manning levels by only 5 per cent.—private companies have had to do much more—they would save 2 per cent.

There was a lot of laughter when my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) mentioned overseas aid. But we are spending more than £2 billion on overseas aid. That is very worthy, and if we had the money I should support it. However, not only do we have a Budget deficit: we have a large balance of payments deficit. We are borrowing foreigners' money to give to other foreigners, and we shall have to repay the loan with interest. In our present straitened circumstances we could easily knock £0·5 billion off aid.

The fact that expenditure per head on major services is significantly higher in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland than it is in England is kept rather quiet. The local government grant per head in Scotland is 50 per cent. more than in England. In Scottish schools we spend almost 50 per cent. more per pupil, and on health we spend more than 30 per cent. more per head in Scotland than in England.

I found the figures for the north of England, because it always used to be said that spending was lower in England because England has wealthy areas in the south. But the figures for Scotland are significantly higher than those for the north of England. That is not fair and we cannot afford it. We should move progressively to a system in which the amount spent per head in all the countries of the kingdom is roughly the same. Our English children have the right to have the same spent on their education as is spent on the education of the Welsh, the Scots and the Irish.

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): Do the people in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland pay a different rate of income tax from that paid in England?

Mr. Townend: The hon. Lady makes a relevant point. No, they do not. We all pay the same tax, so it is unfair that over the years excessive sums have been spent in Wales and Northern Ireland. There is one exception for Northern Ireland: I accept the need for higher expenditure on law and order there.

We must examine the social security budget, however hard it is to do so. We are not the only country that is having that problem. Germany is having it; the Germans are having to consider their swollen social security budget, and France is having the same problem. We are spending £60 billion a year. Anybody who deals with social security will tell us that more and more people are playing the system and abusing it.

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): We are spending £80 billion.

Mr. Townend: I accept that I made an error. When we are spending £80 billion there is always room for significant increases in efficiency in absolute rather than in percentage terms, and for cutting out waste. The number of people claiming invalidity benefit has doubled in 10 years. I hardly think that the health of the nation has declined by 50 per cent. during that period. We must consider whether some benefits should be taxed, and whether they should be universal or targeted.

Central Government support for local authorities accounts for another £60 billion a year. Increases in local government grants should be limited to the level of inflation for non-wage costs and to 1·5 per cent. for wage costs. Many hon. Members will accept that there is still an enormous amount of waste in many local authorities, especially in some of the Labour-controlled authorities.

I support strong defence, but do we need to incur the cost of keeping troops in Germany now that the communist threat has declined? Would it not be cheaper to bring them back to this country? We should save not only on our budget but on our balance of payments deficit. If we are to be the policemen of Europe, with our troops in Bosnia doing the work of Europe, is it right that wealthy countries such as Germany and some of the Scandinavian countries do not contribute? If we are sending our troops should not those countries make financial contributions, as happened in the Gulf war?

In all Departments there are savings to be made, but in the past, when savings have been made, they have been used to improve and develop services. I quite understand that, but I suggest to my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary that in the present difficult situation any savings should go back to pay off the deficit. The Chief Secretary has a thankless task, and he needs the unstinting support of the new Chancellor and of the Prime Minister to force spending Ministers to reduce their demands. I am sure that he will get that support. All three of those Ministers will need the 100 per cent. support of Conservative Members, and they will get it. We need it if we are to have any chance of winning the next election.

[Mr. Townend]

If we fail, and we do not deal with the deficit problem, we shall have difficulty in funding it. Eventually interest rates will be forced up, and if that happens while the recovery is still fragile the recovery will be set back. But if we deal with the deficit, and if we have the courage to grasp the nettle and to deal with the problem of public spending, having solved the problem of inflation and achieved a competitive pound and low interest rates, we shall get the economy of this country going, so that in four years' time we shall win yet another election victory.

7.26 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): I have listened with interest to many of the speeches made in the debate, and not least to the remarks of the hon. Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend). I am sure that, when the hon. Gentleman was speaking about education expenditure in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, he noted that by general consent the education establishment in Scotland and Northern Ireland produces somewhat better results than are produced in England. I welcome his implied commitment to raising expenditure on education in England so as to achieve the same satisfactory results as we achieve in Northern Ireland and in Scotland. I cannot speak for Wales; I shall leave that to a citizen of that part of the United Kingdom.

This interesting debate has produced a lot of material for the press and the other news media. However, I must confess that both the motion and the amendment are lacking in content and deal only in generalities in a way that does not tell us much. Amusing as the speech by the Leader of the Opposition was, neither his speech nor that of the Prime Minister told us much more. We are left with little to vote for, but we may find something to vote against. That may be negative, but in that it is rather like much of what is now going on in the governance of the country.

The real problem facing us all is the £50 billion deficit in the budget. I do not believe that Ministers can welcome that. The House will recall that the Government have increased public expenditure over recent years; the hon. Member for Bridlington drew attention to that fact. Much of the increase took place just after the departure of Baroness Thatcher from the Front Bench. The increases in expenditure were considerable.

Never mind the current deficit; let us look for a moment at what the result of that will be if it continues at anything like the projected figure over the next few years. The total public debt will double in a very short time, and that will lead to huge increases in interest charges to service that debt. Much of the debt is not used for productive purposes. The money is simply spent on social security, education and other matters, and any return from those will be very long in coming.

Once the public debt rises to those proportions, the most intense pressure will be put on interest charges. There is no way that the Government, or the Opposition, can escape that. It is therefore essential that the reduction of the deficit is the first priority of the Government. The question that has to be answered but which has not been answered—those on the Opposition Front Bench have not given much of an answer either—is how to reduce the deficit. The recurring statements from hon. Members of all parties to the effect that we are not to rejoin the ERM make a blooming good start. I am glad that nearly every hon. Member now seems to agree with the members of my party, who never wanted to be in it and who stated their opinion clearly all the way down the line.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Hear, hear.

Mr. Ross: I am glad that I have the support of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), although those on his Front Bench do not share his very sensible views on the matter.

That position on the ERM is a good start, but it is not the end of it. The Government understand that they have to raise taxes and a number of speakers have touched on that today. One speaker drew attention to something that I never could understand: why do the Government take three or four bites at the same bitter lemon? They tell us that they are to impose VAT on fuel next year, and they get bad publicity. They will get another dose of bad publicity next April when the 8 per cent. increase takes place. And they will get a third dose when the 17·5 per cent. increase is completed the following year. If they are to do something nasty to people, they should do it once and get it over and done with. However, if the Government want to bring continuing pain on themselves, that is their worry and not mine.

My objection to the imposition of VAT on fuel is twofold. First, the increase will bear heavily on the lower paid. There will always be people who will be severely hurt by the measure, no matter how much the Government raise social security payments to cover the unemployed and the poorer sections of the community. My second point is more far-reaching: the Government have cleared the way for further increases and changes in the scope of VAT. Having once breached the zero VAT rule that has prevailed for many years, they may go on and start slapping VAT on other items in future years. That is something that no hon. Member would wish to contemplate.

If the Government want cash, they should do as I suggested in my speech on the Budget—increase income tax. It is flexible, it provides instant money and, as soon as the economic conditions allow, it could be easily reduced again. The VAT increase will be very difficult to get rid of once it has been imposed.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Is not the reality that income tax, of all taxes, is the fairest as it takes into account ability to pay, and that that is why income tax should be used if the Government need to raise more income?

Mr. Ross: There is a great deal of truth in what the hon. Gentleman says, and that is why I would have favoured it.

If Ministers, like the rest of us, had been out in the real world, talking to those who were earning comparatively good salaries and who were concerned about those with no job, they would have found many of those folk willing to pay extra tax in order to relieve the burden that has been created by the Government's mismanagement.

The Government must have a long-term strategy, and if the former Chancellor, the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), is to be believed, there is precious little sign of that around. Part of the original long-term strategy was membership of the ERM. The ex-Chancellor told us that he tried very hard to make

it work, and membership of the ERM was the basis of the policy of the Government. Those of us who were against membership have been proved correct in our assessment that fixed exchange rates do not work.

The ERM was, to a large extent, a bomb shelter for the Government. That expression has been used in another context about the Government. But it was a fragile bomb shelter, because its protective strength depended entirely on the Germans paying the price. Once the Germans said that they were no longer paying the price, the bomb shelter crumbled immediately.

We should also consider carefully what the former Chancellor said about the need for courage and determination. He said that he did not believe that the Government had the courage and the determination to carry through the necessary economic policy, and it was for that reason that they needed the ERM. In other words, he is telling the country, the world and the House that the Government lacked the backbone to govern, to take the flak, and to do what was necessary to explain their policies and stick by them.

I wonder how someone who was, until recently, the second most senior Minister in the Government could say that, and could then say that they are still fit to govern. Those may seem harsh words, but the Conservative party must ponder them.

The same frailty of purpose shows when Conservative Members, including the former Chancellor, tell the House that they believe in a central bank. Such a bank would have only one purpose—to act as a bomb shelter for Government decisions. If people stand before the electorate and ask for votes, they then should have the guts to govern. They should have the guts to take responsibility for the economic policy which has to be carried through for the long-term welfare of the community. The promotion of a central bank is an abdication of the responsibility which people seek at elections, and no Government should shelter behind it.

Chancellors of the Exchequer cannot be popular. They are not in office to be popular; they are there to do what is right. I hope that the new Chancellor will have the strength of purpose to do what is right. I hope also that he will be supported by the Cabinet and by the whole of his party in doing that. We have been told, not only by several speakers in today's debate, that recovery is under way. The Government amendment says that recovery is under way. If that is so, why has a new Chancellor been appointed when the policies of his predecessor—initiated after the brilliant Wednesday in September of last year—were beginning to work? The ex-Chancellor told us why. The pollsters and the news media drove him from office. That is a damning indictment of the strength of the Cabinet and of the Conservative party.

If we are to get out of the deficit in which we find ourselves, largely as a result of the policies pursued by the Treasury in the 1980s, the Government must increase revenue and must cut back public expenditure. They must aim also for much higher growth.

I was never convinced by the view expressed by Conservative Members during the 1980s that it did not really matter what sort of industry there was, and that service industry could replace manufacturing industry. It always seemed to me that manufacturing industry, the production of goods, had a greater depth and strength than could ever be found in service industries. As hon. Members have repeatedly said in such debates over the years, manufacturing industry is the source of wealth of this country. Of course, I believe that it goes further than that. Like Churchill, I would have chosen the open sea rather than Europe when considering where to sell the goods that I produced.

In this debate there is not much comfort for Conservative Front-Bench Members. One cannot but wish them well. We have all had a hard time of it, but there is not much comfort for the Government, the governing party or the country in the days and months ahead. There has not been much comfort in what we have heard from the Opposition, either. It is time to face reality. This is supposed to be the House of the great communicators. It is time to tell people outside what the reality is, what the medicine is and what the long-term hope and vision are. If we do that, folk will take the medicine, once they believe that it is necessary. Up to the present they have neither been told what is necessary nor been convinced by what they are being told.

7.40 pm

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): The debate has touched on some important issues, such as public spending, revenue and the borrowing requirement, but it has also had some of the characteristics of a parliamentary set piece and all the rituals that go with such an occasion. There were all the charges, counter-charges, froth and bubble that one usually associates with such occasions. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) took his full part in the ritual, as did the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), but with—I do not mean to be too damning of the right hon. Gentleman—much less skill than the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East.

I would not concur with the judgment of the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East was hypnotic. I do not think that the public will be entranced by his lack of alternative concrete policy. The test that the right hon. and learned Gentleman must pass will come later, not today.

Opposition Members should not have too many illusions about public confidence in the Labour party and the policies that it has espoused over the past 14 years. In particular, they should have no illusions about the extent to which Conservative values are now shared. Those values are now shared more widely than ever before among the electorate, particularly values concerning the delivery of high-quality public services and value for money. *[Laughter.]* The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) may find that remark funny, but I am sure that the people of Grimsby do not. It is an important issue throughout the country.

Opposition Members should have no illusion about the need for sound finance, which has been an important hallmark of the Government over the past 14 years, the need to constrain public expenditure as a proportion of national income and the need to aim to balance the Budget over the Budget cycle.

I concur with what my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Sir T. Higgins) said about timing and economics and about economic judgments being somehow different from judgments that are made in everyday life. Of course that is right, but Conservative values are echoed throughout the country. That is particularly true in respect

[Mr. James Clappison]

of public services. Whatever other charges can be levelled against Conservative Front-Bench Members, it cannot justly be said that over the past 14 years there has been a lack of resources in public services, and certainly not when measured in real terms. That is true in respect of education and health.

On education, it was noticeable that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East chose to make testing the focus of his attack on the Government. It is an important subject and there is certainly an issue about the administration of such tests, but it is not the touchstone of whether adequate revenue and resources have been devoted to education.

I should have thought that there was a more accurate reflection of the increase in real terms of expenditure on education and the vastly increased proportion of young people who are now entering higher education compared with the number under the previous Labour Government. Opposition Members talk about a high-skill economy and a better trained and educated work force. They might care to reflect on the fact that nearly one in four school leavers now go into higher education, compared with one in eight under the previous Labour Government.

Whatever Opposition Members might say about health —of course they disagree with the health reforms and think that the Government are wrong—they cannot dispute that spending has increased massively by about a half in real terms over the past 14 years. Opposition Members used to talk about the proportion of gross domestic product spent on health. That proportion, too, has risen. There has been a massive increase in resources, which has been reflected in public confidence in the quality of our public services, particularly the health service and education, and that has been reflected in election results over the past 14 years.

Opposition Members have talked about public finances. I echo the sentiment that was expressed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) when he talked about the state of finances and considered the timing of public finances, especially debt and debt repayment. Over the past 14 years, although public spending has increased in real terms, the Government have had success in constraining the proportion of Government expenditure as a proportion of national income.

They were able to bring the proportion beneath 40 per cent., which was a considerable achievement. They have also had considerable success in balancing the Budget. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham rightly said, repayments of debt were made until as recently as 1990. For a substantial part of the latter 1980s, repayments were made, and that reduced the absolute level of debt. We all know that things have changed since then, in large measure because of the recession.

I must now express the views that were forcefully put to me in my county of Hertfordshire. Hertfordshire is one of the areas of the south-east that have endured the recession. It had a good period in the middle of the 1980s, but it went into recession earlier than some other parts of the country. By its good standards of prosperity and growth, it has suffered during the recession. I am glad to say that the people of Hertfordshire have kept faith with the Conservative party over that period, and they look to the Conservative party to provide growth now. Certainly, there is no lack of concern about unemployment in Hertfordshire. Conservative Members feel for our constituents who have endured unemployment and for businesses that have had to struggle. There is no doubt about the struggles that many have faced.

The most important issue for the success of local economies, the national economy and the state of public finances is growth. Just as recession led us into the current state of public finances and the public sector borrowing requirement of £50 billion, so we must look to growth to put workers back into jobs and to put businesses back into profit—workers working once again and paying tax as before. We have to look to growth as the principal way of dealing with the public sector borrowing requirement.

I firmly endorse the use of the word "fragile" by my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing. It was an apt description; growth is fragile. In the past few weeks, I have spoken to many business men, business men's leaders, local chambers of commerce, the Confederation of British Industry and others, and the word "fragile" has been used many times. They are delighted to see the signs of growth. Across the board, they see growth coming and a change in the atmosphere, but the word that keeps coming back is "fragile". They believe that growth is being sustained, but that it needs to be nurtured and built on.

I strongly endorse the comment of my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing that the overriding priority must be the nurturing of growth. All other policies must be subordinate to that, both for the sake of businesses and for the sake of the PSBR and the country's finances. Anything that disrupted that growth or that turned us back into recession would have a bad effect on public finances, as well as being undesirable from the point of view of business. I urge Ministers to make the matter a top priority. That is the test that the Government and Opposition Members will face. The real test for Opposition Members does not lie in the ritual of these set-piece occasions; it is whether their policies are more or less likely to bring about growth.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Clappison: I am glad to see that the hon. Gentleman agrees. That is the first time today that real commitment has been given to growth. The Leader of the Opposition made a speech which, although it involved great ritual, did not set out Labour's alternative strategy for growth satisfactorily. We heard little about what the Labour party has set forward as its policies for growth.

Where are those policies? The minimum wage, the centrepiece of the Labour party's main policies, is one of the few policies not discarded since the election. The hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) looks less interested now. Does he think that that policy is more or less likely to promote growth? More important, what do business men, who are more reliable witnesses, think? Can the hon. Gentleman find many business men who support his contention that the minimum wage would improve job prospects and growth?

I can tell the hon. Member for Oxford, East that business men in my constituency are not exactly dancing with glee at the prospect of a minimum wage, nor are they dancing with glee at the prospect of being signed up for the social chapter. That does not lead business men to have any joy in my constituency—nor, I suspect, would it

induce international investors to queue up for an aeroplane ticket to London rather than to Frankfurt or Paris.

We could also do with less talk about sweatshops. There should be less of that derisive talk. That expression was used again this afternoon by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East. It does this country no good whatever to hear that sort of talk. What is important is for the competitive advantages of this country to be sold abroad as effectively as possible and not to be talked about in terms of sweatshops. Thousands of constituents of hon. Members on both sides of the House are benefiting from that internationally competitive position, attracting inward investment into this country.

Ms Ann Coffey (Stockport): I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman is aware that, in a recent survey in Japan among Japanese firms that were asked about the factors that encouraged them to invest in this country, labour cost was the least consideration. The consideration that was important to those firms was local authorities' enthusiasm for their being here, the English language and grants that were available. I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman would feel better—I can see that he has a great interest in the economy—if he dealt in the facts of the matter.

Mr. Clappison: I doubt very much that Japanese investors would be impressed by the prospect of a return to the 1970s or by the implementation of the social chapter. They would not be impressed by bureaucracy, unnecessary costs, more regulation or higher labour costs, all of which are implicit in the social chapter and in the other policies of Opposition Members.

One of the expressions about which we have heard much less recently from the Opposition is "two nations". That was quite a fashionable part of Labour's vocabulary throughout the 1980s. The internationally competitive position of Great Britain has brought about a great deal of inward investment into the parts of the country that the Labour party used to characterise in terms of two nations, especially areas such as south Wales and the north-east. Those are areas that are represented predominantly by Opposition Members. The jobs and prosperity that that investment has brought under a Conservative Government have made a substantial difference to those areas. Talk of sweatshops does not bring any benefit to the electorate or to the residents of those areas.

There is one other thing that the Labour party should do: it should start to acknowledge the fact that growth is taking place. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East chose to quote from a manufacturing journal about the state of manufacturing industry. He would have done better to listen to the real voice of employers—to what the Confederation of British Industry says. In its most recent survey, it found that there was increasing business confidence.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman should have looked at the CBI's most recent forecast for growth, which it revised upwards this year from 1·4 per cent. to 1·6 per cent. That is a modest revision upwards, but it will translate into thousands of jobs and far greater prosperity for many families. The CBI sees even more robust growth taking place the following year, with an increase from 2·4 per cent. to 2·6 per cent. growth. Growth is taking place, which is the fundamental fact that Opposition Members cannot avoid. The real test for them has yet to come.

As I have suggested in endorsing views expressed by my hon. Friends, growth must be the main engine for dealing with the public sector borrowing requirement. I, together with many of my hon. Friends, believe that the Government must devote the utmost attention to that. There is great controversy about how much of the deficit is cyclical and how much is structural. There is considerable uncertainty about that and there are differences of opinion.

It is certain, however, that every penny of that debt is mounting up and that interest has to be paid on it. In those circumstances, it is entirely right for a Conservative Government, who are committed to good housekeeping, to conduct a public expenditure review in the terms announced by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. It is also entirely right for my right hon. Friend to give the undertaking accompanying that review that the interests of the most vulnerable and of those most in need will be given high priority. It is entirely right that such a review should take place.

I endorse the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) when he spoke about the attitude that we should take towards that review and about the framework in which it is taking place—of priority being given to those most in need. It is an extremely necessary review, in the medium term and in the long term, and there are some fundamental issues concerning the proportion of the population in work and the proportion of the population who must be supported by those in work when there is an increasingly aging population. Those are all most important issues. It is right for the Government to address them now and it would be a dereliction of their duty if they did not do so.

During the review, my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary must be given unstinting and unqualified support. There may be some decisions that we find difficult to accept—there always are. Hon. Members have interests and everybody considers each cause and each interest to be needy. However, at the end of the day, there must be support.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington mentioned overseas aid. He said that there might be 20 Conservative Members who would vote against any cuts in the overseas aid budget. He may have been thinking of me as one of those hon. Members, because last year I signed an open letter to the then Chancellor of the Exchequer urging him to protect overseas aid. Many of the others who signed the letter were Opposition Members. Twenty other Conservative Members signed the letter, and my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington may have me in mind. I have always believed that overseas aid is an important priority. I have held the basic, instinctive view that, although we may have problems in this country, they are as nothing compared with the problems in the parts of the world that overseas aid assists.

Be that as it may, the needs of our public spending review must take priority over such feelings and sentiments. If it comes to pass that there must be a reduction in overseas aid, I shall go through the Lobbies in support of the Government. I know that in doing so, I shall reflect the views of many of my constituents, including many who regard overseas aid as an important priority. The Government must be given a free hand and support within a framework of policies in which the interests of those most in need are given the highest priority.

[Mr. Clappison]

I endorse the comments made about the undesirability of increasing taxation, but it is a matter of judgment. My right hon. Friends must take into account economic circumstances and the likely effect on demand. They must bear very much in mind the long-term Conservative commitment to a low-tax society, with the low taxation of both individuals and the corporate sector. I invite them to consider that issue carefully when forming a judgment.

I was interested in the absence of any comments about revenue from Opposition Members, particularly the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East. He called for the debate on public spending and criticised the public sector borrowing requirement and one might have expected him to say something about Labour's proposals on the subject.

The absence of any comment was particularly surprising, because the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) went on the radio this morning and shared with the "Today" programme his views on revenue; the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East did not share those views with the House today. At the top of the hon. Gentleman's list of priorities for raising more revenue was a new tax, which he described as the public utility dividend.

I would welcome hearing about the so-called public utility dividend when the Opposition Front-Bench team wind up the debate. The subject seems to warrant close examination, not just because of any anomalies or injustices that it may create or because the so-called public utilities are already subject to the regulator and already pay tax through corporation tax—a factor that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East did not seem to consider. The Opposition should consider not just those factors, but the effect of any such taxation on the ability of the utilities in private hands to invest.

Opposition Members soon lose sight of the vital thread between profit and investment and the effect on the ability of the utilities to invest and provide a better service to customers, about which we have heard and which, over the past 14 years, have been increasingly accepted by the public. Opposition Members have had to concede that fact, as they have opposed successive privatisations, only to relent of their opposition and abandon their pledges. Those privatisations are now accepted as a fact of life.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East betrayed his instinctive hostility towards privatisation when he addressed the House on railway privatisation. The credibility of Opposition Members does not rate highly when they talk about public finance and privatisation. They are hostile towards privatisation, but they should consider what their advice on privatisation has been and what the effect on public finances would have been had their advice been taken. That is a substantial issue for them to consider.

If the Opposition had had their way, there would have been no privatisation in the past 14 years and thus no receipts from privatisation. There would have been no receipts—cumulatively worth £30 billion with interest—from the privatised utilities. If we had listened to the advice of Opposition Members and the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East, we would have paid a price of £30 billion. If we had listened to their advice and there had been no privatisation, we would have had £30 billion less to spend on public services, £30 billion more to find in taxation or a public sector borrowing requirement of £80 billion rather than £50 billion. Their advice would have come at a high price, and I invite them to explain to the House the impact of their proposal to introduce a public utility dividend.

I believe that contributors to today's debate have been carried away with the ritual and we have not heard an alternative strategy that any reasonable person would expect Opposition Members, particularly the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East, to set out. That is the real test for Opposition Members. The Opposition's credibility is no higher as a result of their endeavours in today's debate. They have made no contribution to the debate.

8.7 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Today's debate has had the feel of a debate on a no-confidence motion. The hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) seemed to approach it as such when, in his sweetly sanctimonious way, he defended an imaginary Government. He said that all the problems were caused by the Labour party and that, after 14 years in opposition, the faults were all those of the Opposition. That is an amazing achievement for the Opposition.

It feels as though we are discussing a sort of no-confidence motion. However, we are discussing a statement of obvious fact. The Government deceived the people at the last election. They concealed the mess, and now that they face the mess that they created they do not have the foggiest idea how to get out of it because they are suffering from a crisis of leadership. This shambling decrepit Government are going nowhere. To use an image from Scarborough, the Holbeck Hall Government are sliding slowly into the sea while the Chancellor plays his jazz piano in the bar room to alleviate the suffering of the hotel residents.

Today's debate has not been great, but it has been revealing. Particularly illuminating was the hurt, doubt, misery and pain on the face of the ex-Chancellor, the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont) at the way in which he was treated for following his Prime Minister's policies to the letter. I offer him an old adage, when it was said of Harold Macmillan in 1962:

"Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his friends for his own life."

That is what happened to the former Chancellor.

Equally revealing was the Prime Minister's vapid performance—it was low level stuff and he showed no dignity. It reminded me of his speech at the last Tory party conference when he was expected to rise to the occasion and give the Tory party a lead. He sank to it and told his followers, "When a child's got to go, a child's got to go—we need more toilets on the motorway."

I drove to Banbury this morning and thought that I saw the Prime Minister's monument as I approached Banbury because on the M40 I saw a huge sign in yellow and black stating, "Emergency WC". I thought that the Prime Minister's vision had been realised on the M40. That shows the height of the Prime Minister's thinking. He is the man who has to lead us out of the mess that we are in. Everyone can make his own judgment about the Prime Minister's stature and whether he is up to the job. The embarrassed faces of those behind the Prime Minister

when he made his speech today showed that the prevailing consensus in the Conservative party is that he is not up to the job as the Holbeck Hall hotel slips into the sea.

I want to be open with the hon. Member for Hertsmere about the Labour party's faults. The problems are not all of the Prime Minister's making—he inherited a mess. He won the prize of power just as that power turned to dross and has had to cope with the disasters that arose from the misguided policies of the 1980s. As my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Wright) said, the Government came in promising what they would do, and did it.

The Government claimed to have performed a miracle through their policies. That claim was about as valid as the hyped up profits created by creative accountancy and lax accountancy standards in this country in the companies operating in the 1980s. Creative public relations laid claim to the Tory miracle. The 1980s were an enormous wasted opportunity—the benefits of North sea oil have been thrown away by the Government. The only benefit that we gained was the huge credit bubble of asset inflation. Asset prices rose and more credit was allowed—the one stoked the other in a sort of North sea bubble which began with an enormous depression produced by the Government's economic incompetence and ended in another severe depression.

Those depressions decimated large swathes of manufacturing industry in this country. It is the industry that we live by, the manufacturing that pays our way in the world and which alone can generate growth and support our services and standards of living. Most of our trade is still in manufactured goods. Whatever the Minister may think about the financial sector, we depend essentially upon manufacturing. If we do not produce, we cannot consume or maintain our standards of living.

Manufacturing has been closed down more rapidly here than in any other advanced industrial country. In the 1980s we lost more jobs in manufacturing than any other manufacturing country, and a larger share of our own market—40 per cent. of our domestic market in manufactured goods is now taken by imports, double the proportion in France and Germany. All this is the product of Government policies throughout the 1980s.

Now, at the end of the period, the Prime Minister has to clear up the mess. It was concealed in the 1980s by North sea oil and by the £30 billion privatisation receipts. There was no need to increase taxes; the tax base could be narrowed because of the revenue from privatisation. Now those revenues are drying up because we are reaching fell-off-the-back-of-the-Government end of privatisation. Now that North sea oil's contribution is set to attenuate, we have to clear up the mess—an horrendous trade deficit that will reach record levels when the figures are published in six months' time; and a public sector deficit which is at crippling levels. The burden of debt grows apace on both counts.

Such growth as the Government are achieving—they are achieving some—results from the competitive devaluation into which they were forced—to our shame—by the men in red braces, not the men in red ties, who I wish had forced them into it. But the Government are putting back on their straitjacket in the form of the Maastricht treaty, which effectively will compel them to go back to the exchange rate mechanism. So their pathetic recovery has a finite time to run, because they have no idea what to do next.

The Government think that the market will provide. All the market does in this sort of extreme situation is compound decline: it compounds prevailing trends. Those trends are towards peripheral decline in this economy, and that will be highly damaging.

I can offer the Government an agenda. First, they must let the pound fall further. Any country with a balance of payments deficit as large as ours must let its currency fall. There is no other way of closing the deficit. The pound has come down by 16 per cent. since devaluation, since when it has risen again by 7 per cent. The result, as an article by Edward Balls in the *Financial Times* last week showed, is that we are still less competitive than we were in 1987. The pound has further to go. It must come down if we are to boost exports and win back the markets that we have lost.

As part of this process, interest rates must come down too. They are still higher in our economy than in the American and Japanese economies. Industry will not invest at these rates; we cannot stimulate the economy at these rates.

My third piece of advice to the Government is: do not worry about the deficit, as the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) is always telling us. It exists for good Keynesian reasons. There is no point in trying to cut it back at this time. Nor should we attempt to fund all of it. Why go to the trouble, expense and burden of debt of funding the whole deficit? We should require the banks to buy and hold Government debt. Why should they not? They have the money to do it.

Moreover, although this might hurt the vested interests of the City and the fees and commissions earned there, we should ask whether we should fund the debt at all. Why not require the Bank of England to give the Government ways and means advances—without charging interest on them at market rates, as it does at the moment? The advances should be free of interest to the Government. That would have no inflationary consequence, because inflation is not a monetary phenomenon—it is caused by pressure on resources.

At the moment, resources are slack. The banks enormously expanded credit in the late 1980s, then suddenly contracted it at the end of the decade. That gap in credit has to be made good. Why should we not use public credit, with advances from the Bank of England on which we do not pay interest and so do not build up a burden of debt? These advances could be used to stimulate the economy and to do the work that must be done to achieve economic growth.

I am not an expert on these matters, but the idea must be looked at. The only things stopping us trying the approach are the vested interests of the City and its desire to manage Government debt and to keep on creating that debt.

Fourthly, we need a sensible industrial strategy—investment in training and infrastructure. Now is the time for that. I have to admit that Opposition Members have not understood that supply side measures do not generate their own demand. Clearly, there is no point in training unless we also stimulate demand so that there are jobs for the people whom we have trained. In that way, an expanding industrial sector will be ready to benefit from the competitive advantage that we give it.

At this early stage in the life of a Government I am afraid that we are at a turning point. We have been there before—politics and politicians treading water, and no clear direction for the nation and the parties to move in.

[Mr. Austin Mitchell]

We were in the same situation in 1961-62, when the Macmillan Government began to falter, just as this Government are faltering. Again, in 1978-79 the Labour Government whom I was elected to support and did support began to falter in the same way. At both junctures, a new impetus and dynamism emerged, in 1978-79 in the form of Thatcherism, with its easy answers which have now failed, and in 1962-63 in the form of the Labour party's planning for the white heat of technology.

The worrying thing about today is that we are treading water but no impetus has yet emerged. It will certainly not emerge from the Government, who have run out of options and policies. All that could possibly emerge from the Government is a new impetus from the new Chancellor, who is something of a wild card and who may have the makings of a Maudling. He is unpredictable. But it will be nothing more than a new tune played by the jazz pianist on a fairly decrepit piano.

There will be no new ideas from the Liberals either. They are essentially a collection of protests, a bucket to spit into, not a coherent party. I thought the leader of the party made a brilliant speech today. The problem with the Liberals is that they do not have debates within the party, only conflicts in the leader's head, which is a rag-bag of policies from which he plucks out and offers whatever happens to be fashionable. Then he puts it back again.

It is only a few months since the Liberals were telling us that the answer to all our problems was to move to the narrower band of the exchange rate mechanism at a rate that is now agreed to have been grossly overvalued. Nevertheless, the cry was, "Narrow bands now, narrow bands now." I can remember that cry coming dramatically from the lips of the Liberal's economic spokesman.

I am disappointed that no alternative has yet emerged from the Labour party. That could be a question of the party; it could be a question of my temperament—an obtuse Yorkshireman used to bull-at-a-gate tactics, wanting to get on with it, to get the boot in now and to provide the sort of opposition that the leader of my union, the General and Municipal, wants us to provide. I must accept that the Scottish method is cannier, slower, more cautious, more intellectual. We are in a policy purdah at present. It is certainly sensible to develop new policies for new situations. That was what happened between 1959 and 1962, when the Opposition finally emerged with a powerful range of new policies. That is an understandable phenomenon. It is just that my natural Yorkshire bloody-mindedness wants us to do more now.

All three parties are obsessed with Europe, European approaches and methods and the problem of Maastricht, but those issues are remote from the considerations of most of our people who sense an overwhelming national failure. They sense that the nation is faltering, is not going anywhere, and that its industrial base is not strong enough or viable enough to provide jobs, generate growth and improve the lot of our people. It is not providing a platform for work and skills and the growth that is needed to improve people's lives.

There is a sense of national failure and it will not be solved by endless talk about Maastricht, about putting Europe at the heart of everything that we do or about putting Britain at the heart of Europe. It will be solved only by addressing the fundamental problem that our manufacturing base has shrunk too much to be viable. Unless we widen and deepen it, make it competitive and generate skills, Britain will not survive as a nation of which we can be proud.

8.21 pm

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell). Before he spoke, I had intended to say that there was more consensus in the House on interest rate and exchange rate policy than for some time, but the hon. Gentleman rather shattered that when he said that we need to reduce interest rates and devalue further. He suggested a splendid scheme for borrowing all the money interest-free, but even if that were viable it would be highly inflationary.

We need a policy that will promote growth, create jobs and tackle unemployment. It must promote manufacturing and Britain's exports, increase productivity and reduce our unit labour costs. It should deregulate as far as possible and reduce the burdens on industry, thus making the United Kingdom attractive to investors.

By and large such a policy currently exists. Interest rates are lower than they have been for about 25 years, and inflation is lower than for 30 years. The exchange rate is much more competitive, and during the recession productivity has made tremendous strides. Britain's exports are more competitive than for many years, and there are tremendous opportunities for more.

The prospects for recovery are good, but there are two qualifications, one of which is domestic and the other international. The domestic one is that there is still less consumer confidence than we would like, largely because of the threat of unemployment and the fact that many people still suffer from negative equity. There is some way to go to overcome those problems.

Internationally, we are competing in markets that are rapidly contracting. I am not sure that people appreciate the dire state of the German economy, where industrial production fell by 12 per cent. in the past year. Although it is a difficult market for us, British exporters are having great success there, simply because high costs are pricing many German manufacturers out of the market.

The main threat to recovery is the size of the public sector borrowing requirement, which has been mentioned many times in the debate. I am sorry that the Leader of the Opposition refuses to address the issue and say how he would tackle it. He simply engages in scaremongering about reducing expenditure, although the Government have made it quite clear that above all else they will protect the most vulnerable in society.

I am also sorry that the leader of the Liberal Democrats refused to say how he would set about increasing taxation. He said that, in his opinion, £30 billion of the deficit was structural and should be tackled by increasing taxes. If he tried to deal with all that by way of income tax, it would require an increase of 15 per cent. in the standard rate. The right hon. Gentleman should say precisely what he has in mind for tax increases.

Prospects for the PSBR are hard to forecast. There are advantages in having forecasts in the Red Book from a panel of independent forecasters. Although the Government have forecast for next year a PSBR of £44 billion, the independent forecasts range from a low of £32

billion to a high of £60 billion. That illustrates the difficulty of forecasting from a range of large figures. We should not get too hung up on £50 billion or £44 billion.

The deficit is clearly too high, and has risen rapidly. Only five years ago, the public sector debt repayment was £15 billion, and some optimistic Members spoke about repaying the national debt by the year 2000. The situation can be reversed with equal rapidity if we can secure the necessary economic growth, because there is no doubt that much of the deficit is cyclical and not structural.

However, we must tackle it in the meantime, because of the cost of servicing the debt. I accept the tax increases in the Budget of £6 billion next year and £10 billion the following year, but I should not like to see further tax increases. If the Government need to do more to tackle this large deficit, they will have to reduce public expenditure.

I disagree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), who said that we should increase income tax by 1p or 2p in the pound. I intervened in his speech to say that there were to be income tax increases of £8 billion. It is not quite that, but out of the £10 billion proposed for 1995-96, only £2 billion is accounted for by VAT on domestic fuel and power. The other 80 per cent. is accounted for by increases in other taxes. When the increases in income tax and national insurance contributions are added, they amount to more than half that, to almost £5 billion.

Therefore, the Red Book already proposes substantial tax increases and I disagree with those who say that they are unfair. They are spread to cover all taxpayers, because the allowances and the basic rate limit will be frozen and various other restrictions will be introduced. In two years, that will increase the income tax bill of every taxpayer. That will be sufficient, and, as I have said, further inroads on the deficit should be made by tackling public spending, because much public expenditure could be reduced without affecting the most vulnerable in society.

Prospects are now better than for some time. Business confidence is higher than for more than 10 years, and the prospects for manufacturers and exporters are good. Manufacturing performance has been impressive. Our motor components manufacturers are selling to Germany, to Mercedes. Rover now produces motor cars that can compete with BMW and Mercedes.

Industry needs a period of stability in exchange rates, interest rates and inflation. Given that, there will be gradual economic recovery, which we shall all welcome.

8.28 pm

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): The debate is on important issues. The Prime Minister challenged my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition about our programme at the election, but he failed to recognise the key difference between the Opposition and the Government. The side that wins the election has one important advantage over the people who lose, which is that the winner has an opportunity, in theory, to deliver its election programme—or break its promises. The Opposition do not have that opportunity.

The issues that we are now discussing reflect the simple fact that the Government have broken so many of the manifesto promises they made last April. They have not lived up to the statements that they made to the people in order to win the general election.

I wish to challenge the Government on one or two important points. I have raised the first issue time and again, and Ministers, have failed to answer it. The Government's public expenditure plans in the past and for the future always include figures representing receipts from the sale of assets such as National Power, British Telecom or PowerGen. I shall not debate the folly or otherwise of the railway privatisation as it is not appropriate to the debate, but assuming that the Government continue with the policy, what will they do when they have no more assets to sell to supplement their programme? They have to tell us what they will do then.

It all comes back to the fundamental question that we are debating today. Everyone is saying that we have to do something to reduce the £50 billion public sector borrowing requirement. The options are to increase taxation or to reduce public expenditure or, in theory, a combination of the two. The other possibility, which we all want, is a growth in the wealth of the country.

As I represent a key manufacturing area, I feel that there has to be growth in the manufacturing sector and in employment in manufacturing industry to get our balance of payments into surplus and reduce the appalling deficit in manufactured goods. Whoever is in office, we will never get the economy right until we recognise, once again, that the nation's wealth, and indeed its bread and butter, depends on our manufacturing base. Until we tackle that and get it right, we shall continue to have difficulties.

The Government say that they do not want to increase taxation, but we saw numerous examples of increased taxation in the Budget. Time and again in the past 14 years, they have got away with conning the public. They have done it cleverly by reducing direct taxation and increasing indirect taxation.

The overwhelming majority of people in my constituency now pay a higher percentage of their earnings in tax than they did under the Labour Government. They pay less in direct taxation, but their indirect taxation has increased.

When the Tories won the election in 1979, they increased VAT from 8 per cent. to 15 per cent. They then increased it to 17·5 per cent. to reduce the impact of the poll tax. Everything that was zero-rated is gradually being brought into the scope of VAT, and it has now been extended to domestic fuel and power. We all know that that was only the first step. Everything that is zero-rated at present is also under threat.

I believe that domestic fuel and power should remain zero-rated. The case for their being zero-rated was good in the first place, as it was for children's clothes, food and transport. The public believe, as I do, that the Government will gradually bring those items within the scope of VAT, as well as books and newspapers.

The Government are obsessed with not increasing income tax, which is based purely on the ability to pay and is the fairest possible way of raising revenue.

The hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) said that the Government will protect the most vulnerable people in our society. We have heard that phrase time and again; we have also heard about better targeting. I know what has happened in Burnley after better targeting and the protection of the most vulnerable. The poorest and most deprived sectors of the community have lost and the wealthiest have gained. That is what better targeting

[Mr. Peter L. Pike]

means in Tory terms—making the poor pay and suffer more, and giving a little more to those who at least need it because they are already wealthy.

I referred to the increase in VAT. I received from the Library a table of the increases in the price of leaded petrol. I shall not debate the rights and wrongs of duty on fuel for cars, but it was 48·8 per cent. in January 1979 and it is now 71·1 per cent. of the price we pay on a gallon of fuel, assuming that one is still using four-star leaded petrol, which I do not. That is only another example of how the Government have shifted taxation on to national insurance, VAT and other duties. For 14 years, they have managed to get away with conning people that they would lose as a result of higher income tax.

Last year, the Government got away with telling people who pay no tax that they would pay more if Labour were elected, when they would have been further from paying tax. I do not know how people believe some of the ways that the Government manage to con people.

I shall now turn to low pay, which I mentioned in a question to the Prime Minister last April. I also received a letter from him last week. The Prime Minister and the Government fail to recognise the scandal of low pay. In the 1990s, it is tragic to erode the protection of workers and working conditions that were fought for for so many years.

Why should we say that workers are not entitled to fair pay and conditions for a fair day's work? Why can we not have the social chapter and why is Britain second-class? It is because we have had a Tory Government since 1979. Why are we abolishing the wages councils, and why can we not have a national minimum wage? It will not lose jobs, as Conservative Members claim. That is a fallacy.

In my constituency, people work for scandalously low pay. I see that my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice), who represents the constituency adjacent to mine, is in his place. Some people in our constituencies work for £60 a week before deductions. The Minister says that they get family credit, but it is appalling that in 1993 some people have to work for poverty wages. They have been unemployed, and are so desperate to be in work that they are prepared to accept low pay rather than to be on benefit. All credit to them, but it is a disgrace and a scandal.

Lancashire county council had a report published by the Low Pay Unit. My constituency has a high percentage of people on very low pay. The report shows that Blackpool had a percentage that was not quite as bad as that for my constituency, that pay was slightly higher there. That was clearly because a high percentage of people in Blackpool are still protected by wages councils in catering, hotels and tourism. Once those wage councils are abolished, the people of Blackpool will see wages at the bottom end drop to the same level as in Burnley and north-east Lancashire.

As to the use of housing capital receipts, I have never in peacetime known so many housing problems. Homelessness has become a national rather than a big city problem, and councils are unable to meet their obligations to provide home improvement grants in the private sector, build their own houses, or improve their existing housing stock.

Housing associations, which the Government favour and which Labour does not oppose, say that they cannot build affordable housing and that a ghetto is being created, because only those at the top end of salary scales and those on full benefit can obtain a housing association property.

But for Government dogma, the capital receipts that already exist could be used. A concession has been granted for the current year, but we do not know whether it will be extended. Historical capital receipts, to which I shall refer later, cannot be used.

As to the current year's receipts, I was in the Chamber when the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, who is now in his place again, made his statement about their use—but that is more of a con trick than a reality. Local authorities such as my own have lost their urban programme money. The Prime Minister said, "You should be glad that some authorities have city challenge." It is little use telling an authority that, although it did not receive city challenge money, it should be happy that others did and to pay for it.

In Burnley, receipts taken into account have been increased in the Government's calculations, and capital allocations have been reduced in the specific capital grant, from 75 per cent. to 60 per cent. That not only takes account of Burnley's theoretical capital receipts—so it will not even break even—but overstates the situation, so that Burnley will lose. Capital receipts will not help, and Burnley will be able to do less about its housing as a result of the change.

If the Government allow historical capital receipts to be used over a sensible, phased period, and directed at areas of need—I accept that some benefiting areas do not need them—we could tackle the housing crisis and get back into employment building and construction workers and those who make items such as baths, taps and window frames. That would give them consumer spending power, and they would pay tax and national insurance instead of claiming benefits. As people moved house, they would buy curtains and carpets.

I could develop that theme, but I hope that the Chancellor of the Exchequer accepts that capital receipts should start to be used. That would not only help to tackle the housing problem, but would start, in a sensible, phased manner, to get the economy moving in the direction we want, reduce unemployment and lower the public sector borrowing requirement. I hope that the Government will face reality and acknowledge that they can take certain initiatives, if only they would be willing to change their policies and direction.

8.44 pm

Mr. David Willetts (Havant): I find myself next to the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), who made a significant personal statement earlier and reminded the House of his historic achievement in bringing inflation below 2 per cent. The main policy issue that he raised as a point of disagreement between himself and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was the case for an independent central bank. He argued for it on the ground that there was a need to bring extra credibility to monetary policy.

I take this opportunity, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames is fortuitously in the Chamber, of commenting on that proposal. I believe that my right hon. Friend did his own record a disservice, because credibility is gained not by legal change and

statutory measures but above all by showing the markets that Governments are prepared to take the tough measures necessary to bring inflation down.

This Government have gained precisely that credibility as a result of standing by policies that brought inflation below 2 per cent. My right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames referred to the improvement in the yield curve. That was achieved because credibility was gained without having a new, legally independent central bank.

It is also possible to gain greater operational independence for the Bank of England without putting it on a new statutory footing. Indeed, significant progress was made under my right hon. Friend's Chancellorship. I think back with some embarrassment to my own experiences 10 years ago as a Treasury official working on monetary policy.

In those days, the Bank of England used to send the Treasury a draft of its report on the conduct of monetary policy which was to appear in the Bank's *Quarterly Bulletin*. We used to sit around working out whether the sentence was correct, and whether this or that paragraph was entirely consistent with the Treasury view. We used to send long letters back to the Bank of England explaining why it should not say X or ought to formulate a point rather differently. That no longer happens.

Instead, in a welcome policy innovation, the Bank of England produces an independent report on the Government's inflation performance and on prospects for inflation. Neither Ministers nor officials would wish or dare to tamper with that. It has brought significant credibility to Government policy.

The irony in my right hon. Friend's remarks this afternoon was therefore that the objective which he seeks —gaining greater credibility for monetary policy by operational independence for the Bank of England—is one towards which significant progress was actually made during his Chancellorship.

My right hon. Friend's statement was in striking contrast to the speech of the Leader of the Opposition, which contained nothing of substance. No one has a clearer idea now than at the beginning of the debate of where the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) stands on the big questions of fiscal policy. The right hon. and learned Gentleman calls a Supply day debate on taxing and spending but tells the House nothing of Labour's policies. Does he believe that the PSBR is too big, that public spending is too high or too low, that tax increases are necessary or not? For any Leader of the Opposition with pretensions to government to devote a 30-minute speech to spending and taxing without answering any of those questions was an intellectual and political failure of considerable proportions.

The debate was simply an attempt by the Opposition to exploit the ritual of the annual public expenditure round. The well-known stories appear, like the first cuckoos of spring, with speculative press reports as to what might happen in the Public Expenditure Survey Committee. One would have thought that, after years of such stories circulating, people would learn to take them with more of a pinch of salt than they appear to be doing this year.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Perhaps the hon. Gentleman has a lesson for us. Perhaps we do believe what we read in the press; perhaps the actuality is worse. Before the Budget, the word was that VAT would be imposed on books and newspapers: everyone got very excited about that, and we received letters from newspaper proprietors and the like. What happened, however, was worse. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that he welcomes the imposition of VAT on domestic fuel? When he stood for election, did he tell the voters that his party would introduce it?

Mr. Willetts: I am talking about the prospects for this year's public expenditure round. My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Sir T. Higgins) made an interesting observation when he asked why Budget purdah could not be extended to that. But surely the point is that Treasury Ministers already face a dilemma similar to that presented by the run-up to a Budget.

If Treasury Ministers rule out every tax increase that they do not intend to implement whenever the possibilities are mentioned, eventually the shape of the Budget will become apparent. Similarly if every scare story in the press about a public expenditure idea that will not come about is ruled out, we shall be left with a clear indication of the state of the Treasury's negotations with spending Departments. That is no way in which to conduct the public expenditure round.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes), challenged me to say what would emerge from the round. The best indication can be found in previous negotiations. Last year, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury scored a considerable achievement: he achieved a reduction of £2 billion in public expenditure plans for 1994 and 1995 on what had previously been planned. Normally, planned spending is increased every year as the year in question approaches.

Let us look at the figures for expenditure increases. Following an unsustainable 6·5 per cent. increase in real spending in 1992-93 and a 3·75 increase in 1993-94, the plans provide for a 1·25 per cent. increase in next year's spending and a 0·75 per cent. increase in the year after that. Despite all the scares about cuts, the public expenditure round will actually involve a rather different Treasury battle—a battle to hold to its previous plans. If it can do that, it will be doing well.

The Chief Secretary has also announced a fundamental medium-term review of public expenditure. The Opposition have launched their own fundamental review of public spending, under the chairmanship of Sir Gordon Borrie. I do not feel that the Opposition are in a position to attack the Government for their review when the Opposition are carrying out a review of their own. We are told that the Opposition's review rules out no options; we are told that it is very wide-ranging. I was rather surprised to receive a letter from Sir Gordon Borrie inviting my suggestions for Labour's review on social spending: surely it is impossible to be more wide-ranging than that. I am still waiting for a letter from the Chief Secretary—but that is another story.

In considering medium-term expenditure on the welfare state, it is worth trying to identify some areas in which cuts are possible. I believe that, given the decision by the European Court of Justice that pension ages must be equalised, a manifestly sensible move would be to equalise them at 65. I also believe in better targeting of social security benefits: it is absurd that the most affluent fifth of pensioners with large incomes from occupational pensions

[Mr. Willetts]

and personal savings receive more income from the state in benefits than the poorest fifth. It is difficult to defend such a position.

The decisions faced by the Government, however, do not just concern expenditure; they also concern taxation. As my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) rightly pointed out, the Budget contained an announcement of significant increases in personal taxation. The row about the increase in VAT has distracted attention from the fact that the freezing of personal tax allowances, and future increases in national insurance contributions, will mean asking the personal sector—especially the more affluent members of society—to pay higher taxes to bring down the deficit.

The best way in which to raise further revenues is to enable the economy to grow as rapidly as possible. Part of the explanation of the fiscal difficulties that we have experienced over the past two years is that tax revenues have proved much more sensitive to the state of the economic cycle than was expected by either the Treasury or outside forecasters. The recession has five times as much impact on the PSBR through lower tax receipts than through higher spending. The real problem has been the collapse in tax revenues. As we look to economic recovery, it is reasonable to expect those tax revenues to pick up. For that reason, we must do everything possible to encourage strong growth.

There is nothing inherently virtuous about slow growth. Sometimes people are tempted to talk about it as though it were more reliable, sober and respectable than rapid growth—as though economic growth were like alcohol, best taken in moderation. That is not true at all. If the country has the capacity to sustain rapid growth without inflation, we should seize the opportunity.

At this point, we must engage in a rather esoteric debate about unused capacity in the economy. If the economy contains a large amount of unused capacity, we can look forward to several years of strong growth with low inflation. The experts differ: estimates of unused capacity range from 3 per cent. from Mr. Gavyn Davies to 10 per cent. from Professor Patrick Minford. As both are members of the Treasury's panel of outside forecasters, we can doubtless expect some interesting discussions of that technical point on the panel.

I belong to the group that believes that there is a significant amount of unused capacity in the economy. I believe that the supply side reforms that the Government introduced in the 1980s have had a permanent effect, raising the growth potential of the British economy. The interpretation of the recession put about by the Leader of the Opposition this afternoon has been proved wrong by the evidence.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman spoke of an ill-trained work force and a collapse in investment, but the figures and the research simply do not bear him out. Industrial investment is rising more rapidly than GDP, and hence rising as a percentage of GDP; moreover, it fell much less during the current recession than during the previous one. Companies continued to invest during this recession.

I see that the Leader of the Opposition is now in the Chamber. He said a good deal about a crisis in the training of our supposedly ill-trained work force. This week, two independent academic experts have produced a report on what they call

"employee commitment and the skills revolution".

Let me quote two paragraphs from it:

"The Training in Britain inquiry"—

in 1986-87—

"found that 33 per cent. of employed people aged 19-59 had received training in the past three years.

In our sample of employees aged 20-60,"—

and, remember, this was a piece of research conducted during the recession—

"54 per cent. had received training over the past three years. This is a dramatic increase in such a short period.

Nearly all the reported training was related to the current job, and four-fifths of it was provided by employers."

The performance of the British economy on training has improved dramatically, and it is precisely because of the success of our supply-side revolution in the 1980s that we can look forward now to the prospect of years of strong growth without inflation.

8.58 pm

Mr. Alan Keen (Feltham and Heston): I will be extremely brief. I could be even briefer if I were just to list the Government's economic achievements, but that would not be worth standing up for.

The debate is really about the Prime Minister and the economy rather than about the economy on its own—they are linked so closely. I would like to try to explain something that a lot of people have found extremely puzzling, and that is why the Prime Minister is always smiling, through good times and bad. As sporting metaphors have been used already tonight, I thought that I would use a footballing metaphor in my explanation.

We are all happy when our teams are at the top of the league—that is understandable—so the Prime Minister should have been happy when the economy was doing well. But as the economy started to struggle and as the football team began to fall down the league table, he still smiled, and that was a denial of the fact that his team was slipping down. As it went further down the league table, he was still smiling, even as the revenue began to fall, the supporters stayed away, some of the best players had to be sold off and they even had to sell the training ground. He still seemed extremely happy, because he had told British firms that having to sell three of their four factories and sack half their work force was just slimming down. So he was still not unhappy, despite his team's falling performance.

As he approached the bottom of the league table, surely he must now have been slightly unhappy? But he was still smiling. He then began to tell us that there was a recession and a chance of relegation after all, but he did not really recognise that until the last minute. Then suddenly he became very happy because, he said, things could not get worse, soon we would be bumping along at the bottom of the league table and the situation could only improve. However, he had forgotten relegation. In the Prime Minister's case and in the real world, we are talking not about relegation but about resignation, and that is what we look forward to very soon.

I should like to give my best wishes to the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, as I gave my best wishes to the ex-Chancellor. Some people, perhaps unfairly, have said that the new Chancellor has made a mess of education, of the health service and of the Home Office. I

do not know whether that is true, but if it is, he must be extremely frustrated at the Treasury, because someone has beaten him to it. Nevertheless, I wish him well.

8.59 pm

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): I begin by acknowledging the central importance to the debate of the resignation statement made by the ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer. I also welcome the new Chancellor to his job and to his first debate on Treasury affairs, and I congratulate him on the fact that in only nine months he has made the transition from Chancellor-in-waiting to Prime Minister-in-waiting. I doubt that he will have to wait terribly long after today's events. Given that only yesterday he said that he had to turn the economy round, may I tell him that, if he is to achieve anything in his new job, he must also make the transition from the failed Conservative agenda to a new agenda for policy-making that will succeed.

First, we need a fresh industry policy for Britain that will bridge the technology, research and investment gap that is identified by everyone who looks at the issues, and ensure long-term, sustainable growth. Secondly, we need a long-term skills strategy for our country that will implement for Britain the skills revolution by reallocating resources and persuading employers to use resources for training their work force.

Thirdly, we must have immediate action against the surge of mass unemployment. If the Chancellor is to cut borrowing in the long term, he must cut unemployment and raise the long-term growth rate of the economy. If he feels that he must make a choice between public spending and tax reforms, let me tell him that, before he starts to cut the budgets for housing benefit or for invalidity benefit or for pensions, he should look at the very substantial tax abuses that our colleagues on the Opposition side of the House have identified—tax abuses that even the former Chancellor on his last day, in an interview in *The Guardian*, exposed.

As his first Budget approaches in November, let me give the new Chancellor some advice on his Budget purdah to which, given his outstanding track record for reticence, he may be temperamentally unsuited. I suspect that Budget purdah will only work for him if he is told to go away and lie down in a dark room, made to keep taking the tablets and compelled to think carefully about whether he has even one new proposal for the economy to offer.

The Chancellor believes that he comes to the job with something of a clean sheet. May I just remind him that Opposition Members know that he not only supported loyally but was vociferous in supporting all the changes that were made by previous Chancellors, many of which have done so much damage to the economy? When I consider his outspoken support for Government policy, I think particularly of his speech at the Welsh Conservative Conference exactly five years ago this weekend.

The Chancellor is obviously very proud of that speech. He said:

> "There can no longer be any doubt that we are now enjoying extraordinary economic growth, so the real question facing us today is, will it last? If the experience of the sixties and seventies is all we had to go by, I would have to answer no, but I believe that under Mrs. Thatcher Britain has seen such a change, and such irreversible change, that I can answer yes—yes, it can last. In the old days, borrowing always threatened to get out of control. Today all that has changed."

One Chancellor of the Exchequer departed after creating an unsustainable boom and boasting about it. A second Chancellor eventually went after failing to secure the strong recovery that was promised. The new Chancellor, therefore, should learn not to exaggerate the successes of Conservative policy at any time.

We have a new face as Chancellor. It would have been better this evening if we had also had a new policy from the Government. The whole purpose of the debate is to determine whether the change of personnel in the Cabinet has been matched by a change in policy. Having heard the Prime Minister this afternoon, it is clear that, although he has changed his Chancellor, he has no intention of changing the social and economic policies of the Government in favour of the people of this country.

The revelations of the former Chancellor of the Exchequer were the key feature of the debate: that there is no chance of change under this Prime Minister. His revelations were about the way that affairs have been conducted in Downing street. What was significant about the ex-Chancellor's revelations was that, in the case of every central event, when mistakes were made it was the Prime Minister's insistence upon making those mistakes that caused the problems that the country faces: the intensification of the recession before the right hon. Gentleman became Chancellor, the use of interest rate policy in advance of the election, the timing of decisions such as the decision to join the exchange rate mechanism.

These were not indictments of isolated policy errors. It was not just about mistakes of timing over this or that decision. Today we had a crushing indictment of the style of the Prime Minister and of the character of his Government. What the country feared, and now knows, is not that the Government have got it wrong on just about every major issue that they have tackled but that they have no strategy, no purpose and no sense of direction, that they are driven by events, not controlled by them, that they listen to Saatchi and Saatchi before they make their decisions, that there is nothing at the centre, just a void, that there is no central philosophy governing events.

The former Chancellor's indictment was perhaps the harshest we have ever heard from a campaign manager about the candidate he supported and with whom he worked as a colleague for more than five years at the Treasury. The Prime Minister should now confirm what the ex-Chancellor has alleged: that interest rate decisions were taken with a view to politics, not the economy, that the policies did not matter too much, just how they were presented, that everything was done with the next 36 hours in mind.

Having heard the former Chancellor's statement, I can understand his sense of grievance at the Prime Minister. He now knows, at first hand, what is meant by the phrase, "Unemployment is a price worth paying." His unemployment, the Prime Minister considered, was a price worth paying for a few more months in office. Can the ex-Chancellor say that he has any regrets now? He could be forgiven for regretting that he ever trusted the Prime Minister. The second in command was sacked for obeying the orders of his leader. If the policy was that of the Prime Minister, the whole country will now ask: why was it that the Chancellor, not the Prime Minister, paid the price for the mistakes?

What we have found, of course, over the past few weeks is that it is not just the former Chancellor who believes what is said in the resignation statement. There are others

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who sense that this Government have lost their direction. People as close to the Prime Minister as the former Chancellor believe exactly the same. On every central aspect of criticism that was made by the former Chancellor, is not the new Chancellor already on record as agreeing with him?

The Chancellor gave an interview immediately after the county council elections, in which he made it clear:

"We are in a dreadful hole."

That is hardly an endorsement of the Government's record under the Prime Minister. The Chancellor went on to say—this is significant because of the turn of events:

"The key thing is not to get into a panic"—

advice the Prime Minister did not seem prepared to take—

"or start looking for a head to go in the basket to appease our more worried Back Benchers."

It is comforting for the ex-Chancellor that the new Chancellor did not think that the answer was to get rid of the old Chancellor, to have any summary executions from the Government or to panic with a reshuffle, or that those actions would solve the problem.

The Chancellor went on:

"We have to approach this thing with common sense and decide how we are to get out of this dreadful hole we are in. That requires a medium-term view, an agenda for the Government over the next two or three years. It requires an agreement about how we are going to present the agenda in a way that gives back a sense of purpose to our followers."

The new Chancellor was in no doubt that what was needed was a new agenda and for the Government to give a sense of purpose to their followers. What is the difference between what the former Chancellor said about the Prime Minister and what the new one is saying? They both agree that the Prime Minister and his Cabinet have lost their way and their sense of direction.

What has been the Prime Minister's reaction in the past few weeks? It is certainly not to turn up at events where he should be to answer debates that he has been involved in. What change has come about as a result of the Prime Minister's recognition of the problems of the county council elections? Have we had a new industry policy? [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] A new deal for the unemployed? [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Have they dropped rail privatisation? [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Have they thought again about coal privatisation? [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Have they even thought about prison privatisation or dropping VAT on fuel and the charges to pensioners?

In response to one of the worst years ever for a Government, in response to one of the biggest by-election defeats ever inflicted, in response to the creation of a situation in which we no longer talk about the Tory shires, but only about the Tory shire, we have had a series of Cabinet promotions, with one member of the Cabinet dropping off at the end. After 1 million redundancies in the country under this Prime Minister, had we not the right to expect more than just one redundancy from the Cabinet?

The Prime Minister explained why only one person went from his Cabinet and there were no new changes in policy. When he was asked at a press conference in Paris only a few days ago, he said:

"All that was necessary was to refresh the Government."

There was not a change to help the country, the economy, unemployed people or our trading position, but somehow the Cabinet was in need of refreshment, as if the problem was boredom in the Cabinet rather than crisis throughout the country.

As a means of refreshing the Cabinet, what happened? What decision was made? The refreshing answer to all our problems was the right hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) becoming Secretary of State for Wales. The right hon. Member for Wokingham presumably went to Wales because Wokingham and Wales both start with "W". He was plucked from relative obscurity and given a road map to take him to Cardiff. A Cabinet that needs to be refreshed by the inclusion of the new Secretary of State for Wales is indeed a Cabinet in need of refreshment.

The only new initiative after a year of disaster that has come from the Prime Minister is that he thinks that the presentation of events must be improved—as the former Chancellor confirmed today—and not the policies. The fact that 1 million more people are unemployed under his leadership is simply a problem of presentation.

Ten million pensioners facing the imposition of VAT must be an excellent policy sadly misrepresented. Spending cuts in health or other services are a great idea, if only it could be got across. According to the Prime Minister, the only problem is how policies are communicated. That is such a pathetic explanation that I can understand why, after 30 minutes with the Prime Minister, the former Chancellor could not understand why he had been sacked and was eventually reduced to faxing rather than writing a letter.

As the Government will find, the truth is that one can change the style, the presenters, the ad men and the public relations agency but, if there is no strategy, no direction and no purpose—as we now know—everything remains the same. I must warn the Prime Minister that he may think that the economic crisis is over, but for him the political crisis is only just beginning. He should be clear that, if the ex-Chancellor was the last to know at the last reshuffle, he—the Prime Minister—will be the last to know at the next reshuffle. Next time, it will not be the Prime Minister telling the Chancellor to go; it could be the Chancellor telling the Prime Minister to go.

I can imagine how events will unfold, but the former Chancellor knows only too well. The Prime Minister may think it safe to relax and go to a party—*[Interruption.]* It is safer for the Prime Minister to be beside the Chancellor in the next few days watching him. I can imagine how events will unfold. Like the former Chancellor, the Prime Minister will think that his troubles are over, that the worst of the crisis is behind him and that he has survived. He will think it safe to relax and go to a party, perhaps at the invitation of a Cabinet colleague, such as the Chief Secretary, as happened only a few days ago. Perhaps it will be a birthday party at the Spanish club, with a relaxing glass of champagne.

The Prime Minister will arrive back in Downing street and will notice the Chief Whip's car parked outside No. 11. In a flash he will remember that absent from the agreeable gathering he has just left were the Chief Whip, the chairman of the party and his next-door neighbour, the Chancellor—the three men who did not go to dinner. He will then recall that the Chancellor's freely announced and admitted ambition is to take over the office of Prime Minister.

The next morning, at 9 am—as the former Chancellor knows all too well—there will be a telephone call. The Chancellor is on his way to No. 10 Downing street, not to

discuss the economic crisis but to hear the unwelcome political news. The Chancellor, the chairman of the Tory party and the Chief Whip will tell the Prime Minister that his time has come. He will turn in despair to his political friends and find that he has none—et tu, Portillo?

The Conservatives have come a long way in managing change at the top. They are no longer the men in grey suits but, as the Chancellor found out, the men who did not come to dinner. Although Lady Thatcher put up iron gates at the end of Downing street, they are not enough to save the Prime Minister. To protect himself, he will have to brick up the door of No. 11 Downing street. He will find that the greatest threat to his position is the enemy within.

The Prime Minister's problem is obvious—he can blame one Chancellor, but it is difficult to blame two. Having sacked one Chancellor when things got tough, he cannot when things get tough again sack another, because the country will ask not what is wrong with the Chancellor but what is wrong with the Prime Minister.

The country requires a strategy for government. It is interesting that the Prime Minister came into the Chamber a few moments ago—he has to be told what to do by the Opposition now, because he has no ideas of his own. This country requires a strategy, a long-term view, an economic and social policy that deals, as the former Chancellor said today, not with only with the problems of today but with the problems of a whole decade. The country needs a social policy based on the needs of the people and on principles, not on an expedient approach to events.

That cannot be delivered by a Government who govern for 36 hours at a time, motivated only by the next day's headlines. We argue that it must be done by a Government who are fair to people, fair to pensioners and fair to those in poverty, a Government with a modern approach to the public services, a Government with an industrial policy. It cannot be done by a Government dominated, as the former Chancellor said, by short-termism and by the approach of Saatchi and Saatchi.

What about industrial policy? The Confederation of British Industry is complaining that there is no proper partnership between Government and industry. It has said that, despite all the talk from Downing street, there is no real attempt at a partnership between Government and industry to secure long-term growth. Today the Government's, and the country's, record on research and development has been published, showing that we have one of the worst records in Europe.

Of course, the complaints about the Government's strategy come not only from the CBI, the engineering employers, the Labour party and the trade unions; complaints have come from within the Department of Trade and Industry itself. The DTI report shows that we are 30 per cent. behind the world's best in productivity, and 40 per cent. behind in skills, and says that the factors that determine competitiveness and that must be improved as a matter of urgency are

"education and training, finance for business, innovation, international trade, physical infrastructure".

In all those areas, companies can do best when they have the support of Government in partnership with them. But, because of a dogmatic approach to industrial policy, we are doing badly in all those areas.

Is not the trade deficit a real problem, which the Government cannot wish away as a short-term problem that need not be tackled? Is not our industrial capacity weaker than it should be? Is it not true that, as the CBI has said and the former Chancellor has acknowledged, there should be a long-term policy for Britain? Is not our skills base low because we have not thought about the long term and about investing in the future? Does not everything that has been said about the lack of strategy and long-term direction, and about the lack of thinking about the future, apply directly to the contraction of our industrial base and the failure to support manufacturing and trade under the Conservative Government? A Government bogged down in short-termism, as the former Chancellor said, cannot solve the problems of our skills base either.

The training budget has been cut. We are 20th out of 22 in the international skills league, falling behind not only Germany and Japan, but Korea and Taiwan. Is that not also the result of the abject failure, confirmed today, ever to be prepared to think for the long term? When we are cutting budgets for people who are unemployed, when there are 80,000 fewer training places than when the recession started in 1990, is it not the height of irresponsibility for a Government to fail to use the best resource of our country—the talents and skills of the people in our community?

While I am on the subject of long-termism, will the new Chancellor, who says that he is tough on vested interests, agree that the banks have largely failed to meet the country's needs, that their charging and commission policies have to be reviewed, and that he should now lay down minimum standards? If he is to take on people other than the weak and the poor, that is the vested interest that the Chancellor should take on, in the interests of the people of this country.

It is also because the Government have no long-term view that exactly what we predicted would happen to our public services and our welfare state is now happening. Because they have no long-term view and no sense of social cohesion, because they think only of tomorrow's headlines, they think that they can get away with breaking promises to the sick, to the disabled and to pensioners in this country.

The Prime Minister spent a great deal of time accusing the Labour party of scaremongering about public expenditure. Let me just remind the Prime Minister, and the country, what he said:

"We will stand by the figures in the Red Book. I see no reason why we should not meet our promises. We have seen these concerns in the past and it has not been necessary to change plans."

Any Prime Minister worth his salt, instead of trying to run away from those promises, would be trying to honour them today.

The right hon. Gentleman said:

"If we were going to cut public expenditure, we would have done it before now, and I do not believe it is economically right. So you can rule out any expectation of that."

If the Prime Minister is to carry any integrity from now on—and that is doubtful—he must not do to his promises on public expenditure what he has done to his promises on tax. He must keep the promises that he made to the poorest people in our country.

I will tell the Prime Minister why he should do that. I have a paper that the Government have circulated around the Departments. The Prime Minister says that the Labour party is creating unnecessary scares and fears. It is the Government who are creating those fears by what they are threatening to do to the sick and to invalids in this country. The Prime Minister must look at the papers, which say clearly that taxation of invalidity benefit is

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"a long-standing policy objective . . . We should review the upper age limit for invalidity benefit. We should be seeking to reduce the levels of average payment. We should be considering taxing the reformed or the replacement benefit."

What is the purpose of the changes? Is it somehow to help the sick and disabled? No, the document makes that clear:

"One of my objectives, which has been discussed with the Chief Secretary"——

this comes from the Secretary of State for Social Security——

"is to curtail expenditure on benefit."

We are talking about a Treasury-driven review to cut public expenditure, not in the interests of the sick and disabled but simply for the purpose of saving money at the expense of people who are sick. *[Interruption]* Let the Conservative Members who are shouting recall that they told the invalid, sick and disabled members of the community at the election that they would stand by their promises. Conservative Members said that they had nothing to worry about, that those benefits would not be cut and that it was the Labour party that they could not trust. Let billboards in every part of the country show the truth—that the Tory party can never be trusted again.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Will the hon. Gentleman tell us why we should believe that the documents are what he claims they are? Will he tell us where he got the documents?

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman seeks to do what the Chief Secretary, the Secretary of State for Social Security and the Chancellor refused to do—to deny the authenticity of the claims.

Mr. Arnold: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: I admire the hon. Member's attempts to appeal to those on the Front Bench on that matter, but there is no doubt that, despite all the claims that public spending would not be cut, the Government are looking to cut that benefit. They are looking to tax it, to reduce eligibility for it and to cut the level of average payment, and are even looking at a replacement benefit.

Mr. Arnold: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The hon. Gentleman knows full well that, if the hon. Member who has the floor does not give way, he must resume his seat.

Mr. Brown: I have a message for the Prime Minister this evening from my constituents who are sick and disabled and who are worried about the Government's plans. He may try to eliminate compassion and caring from everything that is done in Downing street.

Mr. Arnold: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not expect to have to tell the hon. Gentleman twice.

Mr. Brown: It is a commentary on Conservative Members that, when the House discusses invalidity benefit, they try to shout down anyone telling the truth about the dangers to it.

My message to the Prime Minister is that he may be able to eliminate compassion from everything that goes on in 10 Downing street. He may even, by a temporary legislative diktat at Westminster, abandon caring and compassion in his legislation. But he will never persuade the British people that caring and compassion should not be right at the centre of social policy in this country.

This is a Government who made promise after promise to win the previous election. A promise not to devalue was broken. A promise of an immediate post-election recovery starting on Friday was broken. The promise that every teenager would have a job or training, broken; the promise of tax cuts year on year, now broken; the promise of no rises in VAT, broken; the promise that they would balance the books, broken; the promise that there would be no spending cuts, now broken; the promise that national insurance would not go up, broken. Ten broken promises that mean that the Conservative party will never be trusted again.

This is the Prime Minister who, as Chancellor, created all the necessary conditions for continuing recession and who subsequently, as Prime Minister, has sacked a Chancellor whose main offence was that he had only obeyed orders—a Prime Minister who gave the orders and even now assures us that they will not be changed, a Prime Minister who has no strategy whatever, and a Prime Minister who, when pressed on all the difficulties that face our country and economy, pleads only that we should trust him, when the record shows that he has no credibility.

This is a Government with no industry policy because they are short-termist, no policy for the homeless unless it can capture tomorrow's headlines, no interest in pensioners unless an advertising agency tells them that it matters, no policy for the long term because it is not on the agenda of their party posters, and no strategy for the unemployed because they have simply written them off as voters. What is clear now from the debate is that no strategy for economic and social recovery exists within the Conservative party. What is clear is that the whole Tory party now doubts whether the Chancellor and the Prime Minister can get a strategy together.

The Chancellor said that we were in a dreadful hole. The former Chancellor says that the Conservative party deserves to lose without a strategy. There is only one change that can benefit Britain—it is to change the Prime Minister and the Government, and it should happen now.

9.31 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I begin by thanking the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) for welcoming me to the Dispatch Box. I look forward to facing him for some considerable time to come. I have heard him speak on this subject before. I have listened to debates, I have heard that speech before, and I have no doubt that I shall hear it many times. It is the speech that he always gives. It is an extremely good foil to the speech by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). I put them both into the same category: good on jokes, very weak on content. That is true every time they go to to the Dispatch Box.

At 9.18 pm—after 18 minutes of the speech that we have heard before—the hon. Gentleman paused and asked an unusual question, "What should we do now?" That is a question to which he never returned.

"What is truth? said jesting Pilate; and would not stay for an answer"

and we were back into the lists that we have had before.

The hon. Gentleman has an intriguing and forceful speaking style. He does great damage to the Dispatch Box, but it is certainly a very vigorous delivery. He has a particular technique of launching into lists—there is a strategy for this, a strategy for that and a strategy for something else, rapped out in rapid Scottish tones. He has about as much policy content as the average telephone directory, and that has been the case every time I have heard him deliver this particular speech.

If I may say so—it is a modest claim, given the competition that it faced—I thought that the best parts of the hon. Gentleman's speech came when he was quoting me. He has done the usual research. His attack on our broken promises and all the rest of it were half-sentences taken from shredded speeches that somebody delivered on a wet night somewhere in Dudley, and then quoted out of context in order to maintain the pretence that we have broken our promises. I will return to our promises and I will say how we are delivering them. Given the copious nature of the hon. Gentleman's research, I am relieved that he had to go to a Welsh conference in 1987, which I dimly recall visiting, and that he gave a quote about which I have no regrets at all.

It is a few years since I last spoke in the House on economic subjects. I was last on the Economic Policy Committee of the Cabinet in 1985-87, when I used to reply to Budget debates. Nothing was quoted from that. The hon. Gentleman had to go to the Welsh conference to find something that he thought was wrong. In Budget debates when I debated with the hon. Gentleman's predecessors —sometimes with the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East—we had the same arguments. Those years—1985 to 1987—were the finest of the Thatcher decade. We had emerged from a recession. When we began the recovery, the Opposition laughed at the idea of recovery.

When we took the tough decisions that were necessary to make this country more competitive and entrepreneurial, the Opposition opposed every one. They stopped asking for debates on the economy. We did not have Supply days any more because we had sustained recovery, when Britain created more jobs than the rest of Europe put together and when we created a more competitive economy. That is the process through which we are going again for the same goal, and the Opposition have learnt nothing whatever from their experience.

This political row today—I always enjoy such rows—is not directed by the Opposition at the things that matter to men and women outside the House. Our constituents know that unemployment has come down a little. They want to hear from us how we are going to get unemployment down and make them feel more secure in their jobs. Our constituents know that we have got inflation down to European levels. They want to know how we are going to keep it there to keep our competitiveness.

Our constituents know that, thanks to a recession that has been more prolonged than anybody expected, we are borrowing money beyond the level that we should. We are spending more than we are raising. They want to know how that can be tackled. In an hour of entertaining rhetoric from Opposition Front-Bench Members, they did not have a single answer to any one of those questions.

Let us deal with the reality of where we are. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East did not touch on the difficult but encouraging position that the economy is in. Let me give a short list of my own. Retail price inflation has fallen to a 30-year low. Underlying inflation is lower here than in Germany, lower than in America and lower than the European Community average. Retail sales have been at record levels; in the three months to April this year, they were up 3·2 per cent. on the year earlier. Car production has been rising; in the three months to April this year, it increased 14 per cent. on the previous three months.

Unemployment has fallen for three months in a row; it started falling just after the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East predicted a continued increase in unemployment. Manufacturing output is now growing at its fastest rate for five years. Manufacturing exports reached record levels at the end of last year. Manufacturing investment rose strongly in the last three quarters of this year and non-oil gross domestic product has grown by 0·7 per cent. in the first quarter of this year.

That is the economic inheritance that I have received from my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont) working in partnership with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. That is the achievement of the Government's policies, both before we entered the exchange rate mechanism, while we were in the ERM and since we departed from it. It is an achievement that no socialist Government in Europe can match for certain, and no semi-socialist Labour Government in Britain would have got near to.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I have a genuine inquiry. In view of the litany of triumphs that the Chancellor has recited, does he have any idea why his predecessor was sacked and he was parachuted into his place?

Mr. Clarke: I have described the state of the economy —a matter to which the Labour party has not addressed itself for the past 10 and a half hours.

Quotations have been given—one was given a moment ago. During the past six months, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I have spent much time defending my right hon. Friend the former Chancellor against attacks on him from outside which have always disregarded the present state of the economy. We are now committing ourselves to improving it further. The first issue that the Labour party should have addressed—but has not—is how to sustain that recovery——

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): This is even making the Prime Minister's speech sound good.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Member for Hartlepool, who is laughing at me so loudly, was practising public relation techniques when we last emerged from a recession. If he thinks that what we have achieved so far and will achieve again is done simply by investing in a lot of plastic red roses and smart suits, he has another think coming.

The Labour party talks only of our manifesto and promises. I do not think that we shall ever hear anything again about the fatuous promises that it made at the last election. If I had been facing him from the Opposition Benches the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East would be talking not about the state that I have just described but about the consequences of adding about £35,000 million worth of extra public spending to the deficit that we now suffer as a result of the recession.

[Mr. Clarke]

I was misquoted by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East, who should have been at the Press Gallery lunch where I spoke. I take seriously the commitments that we made in our manifesto, which are credible and deliverable—they will be delivered. The political technique of taking half-quotations out of speeches and using them out of context is no foundation for a credible Leader of the Opposition or shadow Chancellor.

I want to consider the issues contained in our manifesto, depart from the tone of debate set by the Opposition and return to some factual demonstrations. The manifesto said that we would increase funding for the national health service in real terms—we have. Spending is set to increase by 1 per cent. in real terms this year and capital spending is at the record level of £2 billion. The manifesto said that we would protect pensions against inflation, as we have done for the past 13 years—we have. Due to the way in which we have done so, pensions and other benefits increased by 3·6 per cent. this April. Inflation today is just 1·3 per cent.

When I was on the Public Spending Committee last year with my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames, we bore in mind the fact that we had said that we would go for capital investment in the roads programmes, housing associations, British Rail and London Underground. We have done all that. Funding for the roads programme has been maintained this year in spite of the fact that construction prices are much lower and allow for even more work to take place. We have given £750 million worth to the housing associations and investment in British Rail will be about £1,000 million this year.

What was the Labour Government's reaction—*[Interruption.]* What was the reaction to those achievements which were obtained last year in a tight public spending round? The Labour party's reaction was the same that it has given this year—to trot out during a tight public spending round complaints that we were to stop inflation-proofing pensions, cut this for the sick and that for the poor. The Labour party does it every year. I have been not only an Economics Minister but a Health Minister, and I cannot count the number of times it has claimed that we will stop prescription charge exemptions for pensioners.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East even brought out the hoary old chestnut about how we will charge for visits to GPs. That was a revisit to shabby triumphs. The Labour party won the Vale of Glamorgan by-election by claiming that we were going to charge for visits to GPs, and another John Smith lost the constituency once the health reforms were in place and Labour's accusation turned out to be untrue——

Mr. Gordon Brown *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I am impressed by the way in which the bodyguard leaps in to protect his right hon. and learned Friend, who today did not repeat a solitary thing that he promised at the last election, let alone make up his mind about what he wants to do next. At the end of the Maastricht debate, he did not know whether he was going to vote yes or no. At the end of his inquiry into proportional representation, he decided not to plump one way or the other and to hold a referendum. He does not know what to do with clause 4—keep it, scrap it or, as the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) suggests, rewrite it.

The Opposition's jokes are highly entertaining, and I have to confess that, although it is the duty of the Minister to struggle to keep a straight face, I sometimes fail to do so. Sometimes I struggle to keep a straight face when I see the wholesale lack of commitment to any sort of policies on the part of the Labour party.

I should like to turn to a matter dealt with seriously by my right hon. Friends the Members for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), for Worthing (Sir T. Higgins) and for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts). They dealt with the Budget deficit, a subject on which there was deafening silence from the Opposition.

At the heart of our manifesto was a pledge to control public spending—one of the reasons why we get returned to office. We have to return the Budget to balance and over time we have promised to reduce the share of the national income taken by the state. It is generally acknowledged that the public sector borrowing requirement of £50 billion is too high, and it will be my day-by-day task in the months ahead, with my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary, to deal with it.

The overwhelming cause of this large borrowing is the fact that the recession went on longer than expected—not just longer than the Government expected, but longer than almost every forecaster and business organisation expected. The Labour party was no more on target than the forecasters—it always accepted the figures in the Red Book.

We may enjoy ourselves in debate, but to us falls the responsibility of tackling a projected PSBR of £50 billion, which lies like an iceberg in the path of the recovery which we hope to sustain and about which we have heard nothing positive from the Labour party.

My predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames, said only recently that as a Conservative Chancellor he hated borrowing almost £1 billion a week. I agree with him. Any Conservative Chancellor hates that and would be determined to tackle it. If Labour had won the election and had carried out its election pledges, it would cheerfully have borrowed much more and, when tackled about it, would have said that it would be paid for out of growth—the best the Leader of the Opposition can come up with.

We have set out how we will tackle the deficit—through a combination of economic growth, the tax increases announced in the last Budget and tight control of public spending. Every sensible man and woman in the country knows in his or her bones that the Government have a duty to contribute to that. A continued deficit on such a scale would put at risk the conditions for recovery that we have worked so hard to achieve. Britain is not by any means the only developed country facing this problem. However, we are the only major European economy showing the signs of growth that I have outlined.

Budget deficits are a feature of the last world recession and they are hitting other countries more strongly than ours. For example, in Germany, projections for the deficit have been increased to DM70 billion and the German Government expect their economy to contract this year. The Commission is not increasing its expectation of

growth in Germany, as it is for Britain. It expects that economy to contract, and that will undoubtedly mean higher future deficits.

In France, the deficit is almost 5 per cent. of the national product and the new Government have introduced harsh spending cuts and tax increases to reduce it. In the United Kingdom, inflation is below the average, we have limited economic growth, our interest rates are the lowest in the EC and our competitiveness has markedly improved.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clarke: No. I apologise to the hon. Gentleman.

The improvement in our competitiveness is one of the Government's finest achievements during our period of office and it has stopped Britain being the sick man of Europe, as it used to be, into, throughout and out of every parliamentary Session. That is not due only to the depreciation of sterling since September. Even in the recession, we are in a good position compared with many of our competitors, because productivity is increasing, earnings are growing at their lowest rate for 25 years and our costs are falling, whereas costs in our competitor countries—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Campbell: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Clarke: No, I will not.

Mr. Campbell *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must resume his seat.

Mr. Clarke: Our forecast for growth this year has been increased since the autumn statement from 1 per cent. to 1·25 per cent. Almost every independent forecaster—lastly and most recently, the European Commission—has increased the estimate for growth this year. I am cautious. I do not say that the recovery can be expected to unfold rapidly. Prudent economic policies will be needed to sustain it and many things must happen to world conditions as well.

The Government stand ready to share the credit for a strong recovery when we have achieved it, but not before. Nevertheless, we currently have the prospect of increased growth, higher tax receipts and less pressure on public spending.

Mr. Campbell *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way shortly. I am trying to discover whether the Liberal Democrats have a serious answer. Growth will obviously contribute—our own forecasts show that—but even a strong recovery will not in itself restore public finances. No sensible observer believes that growth in itself will solve the deficit. Only the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East believes that, as he revealed in a shallow interview on the "Today" programme. He said that Labour was against cutting public spending or raising taxes. Labour is not in favour of doing anything in particular. That is the traditional position of the Liberal party. Let us see if it is moving closer to us.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The new Chancellor knows that that is not our position, because he heard my right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) argue that rises in income tax may be necessary as part of a means of tackling the debt. Does the Chancellor intend to devote some of the remaining minutes of the debate to answering the serious criticisms of the conduct of Government policy made by the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), especially what he said about decisions on interest rate policy and about the way in which such future decisions would be made?

Mr. Clarke: Throughout my speech, I have set out medium and long-term objectives. I have said repeatedly since becoming Chancellor, as I said before that, that the conduct of policy of any kind should not be based solely on the pursuit of short-term popularity. Every Government since I have been in the House have been unpopular during most of the time that they were in office, but the British public have the common sense to know that their Governments must sometimes go through such periods. I am setting out the medium-term objectives that will be purposefully pursued.

We had all this talk about raising income tax at the last election. I share the views of my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) on income tax. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister pointed out, before the election the Liberals committed themselves to raising fuel taxes and green taxes. They talked about the anomaly of VAT on fuel. All that heroic being in favour of taxes is about the same as the heroism of the Liberal party on every other subject. They vote against it when it comes before them. That is how they look a difficult decision squarely in the eyes.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Given that the Chancellor puts such a premium on promises, will he confirm that the Prime Minister said that there would be no increase in VAT? Having said that the country was in a dreadful hole and that we needed a new agenda, will he summarise the changes in economic policy that he proposes?

Mr. Clarke: I remember that occasion well. At the last election, before the Labour party moved on—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer that quotation."]—I will answer the quotation. It illustrates perfectly the point that I was making 20 minutes ago about taking half-quotations out of context. I do not know why the hon. Gentleman returned to it.

Mr. Brown *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: It is no good the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East looking at the Transport house brief: he must listen to the context.

That particular phrase had a nice little clip put round it. At that stage in the general election which we were all fighting, the Labour party was telling the country that our plans meant, if necessary, to raise the rate of VAT to 22·5 per cent. The Labour party ran a great scare on 22·5 per cent. VAT before the party moved to the more elevated ground of Jennifer's ear to try to show their concern for the great public services of the country.

Mr. Brown: Will the Chancellor give way?

Mr. Clarke: No. Jesting Pilate must wait for the answer this time. That quotation was dealing with raising the rate. We have not raised the rate.

Mr. Brown *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: Going back to the manifesto, it contains no word about VAT or national insurance contributions. We have not broken our manifesto pledges. I helped to write the manifesto and I confirm what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said. We will deliver that manifesto and getting the wealth-creating economy right is part of it.

Mr. Brown: Will the Chancellor give way on that point?

Mr. Clarke: No. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Brown: What about the deficit?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman does not want to know about the deficit. He has left me three minutes to talk about the deficit.

We have raised taxation. My right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames was right to make the impact of that taxation begin to fall next year, so that the recovery could be sustained for longer. The Labour party is against that. It would restore the tax increases in the Budget, thereby adding £6,000 million to the deficit.

The only solid piece of policy in the opening speech was talk of allowing local authorities to spend all their capital receipts. That would add another £6,000 million to the public sector borrowing requirement. When will they ever learn?

We have raised taxation and now we shall look seriously at public spending. We are looking fundamentally at the budgets of health, social security, the Home Office and education. We are about to agree a public spending remit. That is serious government. It will require tough decisions. That is how Conservative government got us out of recession before and that is how we will get out of recession again.

I am delighted that some of my right hon. and hon. Friends were urging the need for tough decisions today. I am sure that, in due course, they will be voting for those tough decisions to deliver what we must do, because we cannot rely on the Opposition. Six letters and they are anybody's. Any lobby will get their support, although usually it is more fundamentally the lobby that is dominated more by the GMB and the other trade unions than by those who actually sponsor them.

It will be hard work, earning our living as a country in the 1990s. We have the beginnings of recovery—we must sustain it. We have set out a medium/long-term strategy for the results of which we are prepared to answer at the next election.

These debates are all very entertaining, but as my best joke was stolen some time ago, it is the parties opposite that must go back to the dark room and think precisely what contribution they really want to make to serious economic discussion in this country.

Question put:

The House divided: Ayes 278, Noes 302.

Division No. 291] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*

Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Ste[illegible]g, Gerry
Ste[illegible]son, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Gordon McMaster and
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt [illegible] David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley

Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Aldr'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments)*:

The House divided: Ayes 301, Noes 271.

Division No. 292] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Killedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*

Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, E[illegible] *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*

Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle and
Mr. Gordon McMaster.

MADAM SPEAKER forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House welcomes the widespread indications of economic recovery in the United Kingdom at a time when many other major economies are in deepening recession; recognises that the interests of industry are at the heart of the Government's policy and acknowledges the comprehensive programme of training and employment opportunities for unemployed people that the Government has put in place; welcomes the Government's commitment to its Manifesto pledges including its commitment to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of public services through the Citizen's Charter; deplores the scare-mongering stories about public spending peddled by the Opposition; and applauds the Government for its determination to maintain low inflation, sound public finances and firm control over total public expenditure upon which a sustainable economic recovery depends.

Council Tax

Madam Speaker: I now call Mr. Secretary Curry—I mean, Mr. David Curry.

10.28 pm

The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Mr. David Curry): I do not blame you, Madam Speaker, for being slightly confused; I am fairly confused about this myself. *[Interruption.]* I have never been modest when starting something; give me six months and we shall see.

I beg to move,

That the draft Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 7th June, be approved.

This debate is the last piece of local government finance business for the first year of the council tax. That tax is now fully in place and has widespread support. It avoids the unlimited bills of the old rating system, and the problems of the community charge. It is fair to local taxpayers without being administratively burdensome for authorities.

The successful introduction of the tax would not have happened without the help and close co-operation that we have received from local government. The council tax is a success story for which local authorities up and down the country can take much of the credit. The experience that we have all gained in working on it with local authorities has been fruitful, and we have built up trust and lines of communication between local and central government at all levels. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I are determined to continue to build upon that approach.

With regard to council tax capping, local government cannot—and, I believe, now does not—expect to be exempt from the need for the restraint of overall expenditure. Last year local authority expenditure in England was £60 billion—that is £1,000 per head. Taking the United Kingdom as a whole, local authority expenditure accounts for a quarter of total public expenditure, and more than 9 per cent. of our domestic expenditure.

However, it is not our aim that authorities should be capped. As in previous years, we announced provisional capping criteria in the autumn preceding budget setting. Our aim was to achieve as much as possible by setting out clear and fair guidelines in advance, so that the maximum was done by voluntary restraint, leaving as little as possible to be done by capping. But we made it clear that, should any authority budget too high, we would cap it, and hence safeguard council tax payers against excessive bills, and also safeguard the public expenditure position.

In the event, 416 of the 419 English authorities have set their budgets within the cap. That is by far the highest number since capping began. The fact that 416 authorities have set affordable budgets and council taxes is further evidence of the sense and responsibility of local government.

Of course, Government have had their part to play. This year, standard spending assessments increased on average by 3·1 per cent. at a time when inflation reached its lowest level for decades. We are satisfied that each authority's SSA this year is a fair measure for its spending on the basis of the most up-to-date information that we have. But we are already seeking improvements in SSAs,

and, as is well known, in the coming year we are undertaking a thorough review of the SSA and the area cost adjustment that is a component of it.

We especially wish to be able to have regard to the new information available to us from the 1991 census, and to take advantage of the need to incorporate that more up-to-date information to consider how we can improve the SSA system as a whole. I have to be careful when I say SSA, because I am more used to talking about SSSIs, and I appreciate that SSAs are not the same thing.

We have invited every local authority to submit any comments that it wishes to make on SSAs, or to put forward any evidence that it may have that would support changes in the method. Throughout the review my officials have had, and will continue to have, frequent discussions with the associations that represent local authorities. Our object is, with the help of local government, to obtain SSAs that we judge are the best and fairest measures for local authority spending given the information and data available to us.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): When he conducts the review, will the Minister think it worth while to ask local authorities, especially education authorities, about discretionary funding to students in further or higher education? More than half the authorities in England have cut that funding, and that has had an especially bad effect on mature students with household responsibilities, who may be unemployed at the time. The fact that more than half the authorities have had to cut that discretionary funding in order to remain within the capping limits is of concern to Members on both sides of the House, but because the funding is discretionary, the information is not usually collected. The Government should take a hard look at the effect of the new council tax on discretionary funding.

Mr. Curry: As I said, we are examining the whole methodology of the SSAs. I have encountered in my constituency in North Yorkshire the problem that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) mentioned, so I recognise that it is a subject for concern. But I must make one cautionary statement. It would be wishful thinking to believe that one can carry out a review from which everybody will gain.

If some authorities believe that they are being underpaid in the present system, there must, by definition, be others that are doing relatively well out of it. Therefore, when we correct the balance, we are likely to find a number of complainants and a number of beneficiaries. They may be different people, but I have no doubt that those who complain will wish to line up as vigorously as they do at present.

I understand the point that the hon. Member for Perry Barr made. Nothing is excluded from the review, but, at the same time, we must make sure that it is practicable, that there is a time scale in which to do it, that local authorities are consulted and that the details with which they have to work are available to them as soon as that is possible within the constraints of the new budgetary timetable. The hon. Gentleman will understand that.

What of this year's capping round? On 1 April my right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State took his capping decisions. He had regard to all relevant considerations, including the budgets that authorities had set and the provisional criteria that he had announced to the House on 26 November. He decided to adopt criteria for identifying the authorities in respect of which capping was necessary which broadly gave effect to those provisional criteria. Authorities were, therefore, selected for capping which had budgeted excessively or whose budget represented an excessive increase over the previous year.

On the basis of the criteria, my right hon. and learned Friend identified three authorities—Castle Point, Gloucestershire, and Harlow—for capping. At the same time, my right hon. and learned Friend proposed for each of these authorities a cap, or maximum, for its budget.

The toughest cap that we could propose would require a designated authority to reduce its budget so that it was no longer excessive or represented an excessive increase. But we could do that only where, having regard to the authority's individual circumstances, we believed such a reduction would be achievable—that is, that it could be made in such a way as to avoid significant disruption to essential services.

In other cases, we would require only smaller reductions which we judged it would be right to demand of the authority, given its particular circumstances, in the financial year.

In the circumstances of Harlow and Castle Point, we judged that it would not be right to demand the full reductions in a year for those authorities. For Gloucestershire, however, we proposed a cap which would require the full reduction. In terms of the council tax for a band D dwelling with two adults, our proposals meant for Harlow a tax reduction of £288; for Gloucestershire and Castle Point reductions of £55 and £18 respectively.

Authorities were notified on 1 April of their designation, the general principles on the basis of which they were designated, and the amount of the proposed cap. They then had 28 days to tell us whether they accepted the proposed caps. If they did not accept, they could suggest an alternative cap and put forward a case in support of it.

All three authorities suggested alternative caps. Castle Point and Gloucestershire wished to retain their original budgets. Harlow proposed a cap of around £2·1 million less than its original budget, but still £4·6 million in excess of the proposed cap.

My predecessor met representatives of each of the three authorities to hear their oral representations in support of their cases. Before taking his decision, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State considered all the points very carefully, including those made at the meetings.

For Castle Point, whose difficulties arise solely from the need to meet in 1993-94 a £2·2 million deficit which was due to incorrect budgeting in previous years——

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): By whom?

Mr. Curry: By the treasurer. For Castle Point, it was clear that the cap at the level proposed would be very tight. However, the authority told us that it was planning to generate substantial capital receipts during 1993-94 from asset sales. If we issued a statutory direction, Castle Point could use some of these receipts to pay for about £0·5 million redundancy costs that would otherwise be charged against their 1993-94 budget. We decided that it would be right to issue such a direction, and on this basis we concluded that a cap at the level originally proposed would be right for that authority.

[Mr. Curry]

For Harlow, all parties on the council agreed that a cap of more than £11·2 million was required. We considered Harlow's case and considered that, given the magnitude of the budget reductions—about 30 per cent.—and the relatively short time in which they must be made, the original proposed cap was too tight. We judged that a relaxation of £600,000 to a cap at £11·8 million would be appropriate given Harlow's circumstances.

For Gloucestershire, we decided after very careful consideration of all available relevant information that the cap should be set at the level originally proposed.

In all cases, we have undertaken an extremely searching analysis of the authorities' individual circumstances. We are satisfied that the caps that we have now decided are reasonable, achievable and appropriate in all the circumstances of the authorities concerned. In the one case in which we have relaxed the proposed cap—Harlow—the tax reduction for a band D dwelling with two adults is now £263 and for a band G dwelling, £438.

If the order is approved by the House, we shall then serve the statutory notices on the three authorities formally setting their caps. Within 21 days thereafter they must reduce their budgets in line with the caps; new lower council taxes must be set as soon as practicable afterwards. Each of the capped authorities must meet from within its budget the costs of issuing the new council tax bills. It will be for each authority to decide how to live within its budget, but we are satisfied that they will be able to provide an appropriate level of service if they choose to do so.

Ideally, of course, no authority would be capped. But we should not let the fact that we have needed to cap three authorities detract from the fact that it is a considerable achievement for local government to bring in the council tax at an affordable level throughout the country. For the council taxpayers of Castle Point, Gloucestershire and Harlow, the order will mean reductions in their bills and it will require those authorities to curb their excessive budgeting, and I commend it to the House.

10.40 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): The Labour party is wholly and unequivocally opposed to the capping of a council's budget. It is an abuse of central power, it demeans democracy, it undermines the right of local people to decide what services they are ready and willing to pay for, it is in breach of one promise after another from the Conservative party, it serves no economic purpose, and it has not worked in its own terms.

The Conservative party was elected 14 years ago on pledges to give back power to local people. Those pledges have been broken. Also, 144 separate Acts of Parliament have been forced through in those 14 years, each cutting councils' power a little more, each transferring more power to Whitehall or to the unelected quango state. Although only three authorities are specifically named in the order, all councils—all 419 of them—have been capped this year. That is what every council understands.

Former Councillor Bill Dixon-Smith, the former leader of the Association of County Councils, who lost his seat in Braintree when the Conservatives were swept from power in Essex, not least in revulsion against the capping of two authorities in that county, pointed out that the capping powers given to the Government and their use of them has meant that in every case the council tax has been set not by local authorities but by central Government.

Capping orders are but the culmination of the transfer of power from local taxpayers to the central state. Such orders give greater power to the Secretary of State over democratically elected local councils than any powers otherwise exercised outside wartime. Given the seriousness, given the fact that hundreds of people will lose their jobs as a direct result of the order, given that thousands will suffer through reductions in services and given, too, that the Secretary of State actually signed the order and is present, I must say to the Secretary of State that it is outrageous that he has left it to his Minister to speak to the order rather than doing so himself.

I welcome the new Minister to his job and I wish him well. Had the Secretary of State spoken, I would have welcomed him to his new job, but I can understand his reticence, for this Secretary of State was once the Minister for the community charge—the apostle for the poll tax, who evangelised the new system in even less guarded terms than his predecessor in both jobs, the right hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard).

Mr. Mackinlay: The right hon. Gentleman has never been a councillor.

Mr. Straw: He would not have been elected as a councillor.

The Secretary of State said that the poll tax was

"by far and away the best alternative to domestic rates."

He made a speech of 27 pages—I have every page of it with me, in case anybody doubts it—which began with the words

"The morality of the community charge".

He claimed in those 27 pages that the poll tax was "morally superior" to the domestic rates. *[Interruption.]* He obviously believes it. He said:

"The community charge really will put the community in charge."

He went on to tell the Conservative party conference on 13 October 1988—Conservative Members were cheering in the aisles at it—that the poll tax was

"the clearest, simplest and fairest local tax ever. We can go out and win with it."

Wiser counsels in the Conservative party knew him to be wrong.

The Secretary of State did not devote his florid rhetoric only to the poll tax. He devoted it to any tax based on capital values. In case the Secretary of State has not spotted this, I point out that the new council tax is based solidly on capital values. In his speech to the Conservative Greater London local government conference—that may be an oxymoron these days—on 22 November 1988, the Secretary of State said:

"Rate bills based on the value of a home would be a disaster for London. Capital value rates would be a swingeing tax on home ownership."

What does he say about that now?

The Secretary of State—this comes directly to the point—said in an interview in the *Municipal Journal* in August 1988 that the new financial arrangements that he was piloting would lead to very much more independence. He then talked about his belief in the Tory view of local control and local power. In case my hon. Friends have missed that, I shall repeat those words.

I sense that the Secretary of State claims not to have changed his mind; perhaps he still takes that Tory view of

local control and local power. The Secretary of State has an extraordinary set of views. He is in favour of the poll tax as the fairest tax of them all and he is against any idea of a council tax or a capital tax, yet he proclaims the importance of independence, local power and local control.

The reality when the Secretary of State made those speeches and the reality even more today is that the Government have removed local control and local power to a point where the major decisions are made not by local councillors but by the central state. As Conservative Woking said in *The Independent* in January:

"capping has removed the ability of elected councillors to pay for services that local residents want and have voted for."

The capping system is patently undemocratic. It serves no wider economic purpose in the control of public expenditure. If the Minister, who confessed to being confused when he opened the debate, wants to spend his next six months learning the job, I modestly advise him to read the Treasury's White Paper issued in 1988 called, quaintly, "A New Public Expenditure Planning Total". In that White Paper, the case not just against capping but against central Government even collecting the figures for what local authorities spend out of their own resources is set out, page after page.

The Prime Minister, when Chief Secretary to the Treasury, was the author of that White Paper. He pointed out that other countries that have more successful economic policies than we have do not have capping. In some federal countries, such as Germany and the United States which are both unquestionably more successful than us, the federal constitutions do not allow central Government to think about the powers that have been taken here.

The Minister might also look at the answer that the Chief Secretary gave me on 11 January 1993. I asked him to assess the effect on jobs and services, on interest rates and on other major macro-economic indicators of various changes in local authority spending. I assumed that that had been done before the Government decided to go down the road to central control. The answer was that the Treasury had not done the work and that it could not give an answer.

The Minister could also look at the results of the report that the London School of Economics local government unit published in the *Local Government Chronicle* last July. It pointed out that, while capping led to enormous disruption to councils and to local democracy in any one year, over time it had not affected the trend in local government spending because all authorities were forced either by direct Government control or through political pressure to spend at the level of the standard spending assessment.

This year, capping has already led to the cutting of thousands of jobs in local authorities. I remember the then Secretary of State in December claiming that no jobs would be lost as a result of his settlement. It is interesting to note the Minister's silence tonight in the light of the evidence from across the country that thousands of jobs have indeed been lost.

In the three authorities named in the order, there is a very serious situation. Gloucestershire is a relatively low-spending authority. When it was Conservative-controlled, it was a byword for parsimony and it had the worst record of any authority in the country for the provision of nursery schools and classes.

Ms Jean Corston (Bristol, East): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is outrageous that Gloucestershire should be on the list, particularly as the Minister has just told us that the Secretary of State's criterion for deciding whether a county should be on the capping list was that a significant reduction in essential services should be avoided? Gloucestershire has not even got nursery education which we in the adjoining county of Avon have. Which essential services is it being suggested that the people of Gloucestershire should do without? Does my hon. Friend agree that those are the sorts of question that the Minister should be asking?

Mr. Straw: My hon. Friend has far more knowledge of Gloucestershire than I have, and of the comparison between Avon, which has been an excellent Labour authority—incidentally, it has not been capped—and Gloucestershire, which has spent the last few years away from Conservative control attempting to deal with the legacy of appallingly low services that it faces, with no nursery education at all.

The chief executive has written to the Department of the Environment to say that 250 jobs will be lost as a direct result of the proposals, in addition to the 800 jobs which were lost in previous years as a result of capping. Of those 250 jobs, 150 were among teachers—teachers and essential support workers. How will the loss of 150 jobs in Gloucestershire, which the Government are forcing on that county, lead to an increase in educational standards about which we hear the Conservative party parroting day by day?

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that Avon council is so marvellous that every inhabitant is voting to do away with it and to revert partly to Somerset and partly to Gloucestershire?

Mr. Straw: No, I am not aware of that, and nor are the people of Avon, who gave their verdict on the Conservative party in Avon, as across the rest of the south-west, on 7 may.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay), who speaks for the whole community of Essex——

Mr. Mackinlay: The south-east.

Mr. Straw: My hon. Friend speaks for the south-east as well. He speaks for my home county, Essex, and will deal in more detail with the position in Harlow and Castle Point.

Like many other local authorities on a low budget, Harlow was not subject to any capping until changes in the legislation in 1990-91. It has provided excellent services. As the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) should be aware, Harlow is a new town with significant social problems. It has the highest level of unemployment in the county, and its manufacturing base has been seriously undermined in the past 14 years. Its council has sought to make a reality out of the new town and to build community services.

The capping order will lead to a reduction in Harlow's budget, even after the adjustment, of about 47 per cent. It is expected to be able to halve its budget in one year. Already, there have been 200 redundancies. As a consequence of the cuts, there will not be an overall cut in public spending of the sort the Minister is seeking. It is likely that £2 million of expenditure that Harlow was

[Mr. Straw]

previously bearing because of the parsimony of Conservative-controlled Essex county council will be borne by Essex county council, which, happily, is no longer in the Conservatives' control.

There will be big increases in charges for elderly people's bus passes and sheltered accommodation. As a gentleman from Harlow said to me today, whatever he gains on the swings by way of a cut in his council tax bill, he will lose on the roundabouts because he will pay out of his pocket through direct charges for services that he previously received for nothing. Various leisure and support services are to be cut.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman mentioned roundabouts. It is almost legendary in Harlow that a couple of years ago the Labour-controlled council—which has clear priorities in such matters—spent £28,000 on planting flowers on the roundabout in Harlow. The hon. Gentleman committed a sort of Freudian slip. The council has taken away its grant to the citizens advice bureau, while spending £130,000 on a photocopier. Is that the sort of council and the sort of policies that—*[Interruption.]* It is all very well the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) waving me away, but those are the sorts of question to which the people of Harlow need answers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The hon. Gentleman is expecting to catch my eye later in the debate. If interventions are of that length, he will probably not be successful.

Mr. Straw: If that is the best the hon. Gentleman can do, I look forward with great interest to his speech. What is wrong with spending money on flowers—on roundabouts or anywhere else? Why do we need the full panoply of the central state to determine whether local electors should be allowed, out of their own pockets, to spend a few thousand pounds of flowers? I am delighted when Blackburn borough council spends money on flowers. When Lambeth council recently had to cut the money it was spending on flowers, local Conservatives were the first to complain.

The situation in Castle Point was glossed over. It is the only Conservative-controlled authority among the authorities that we are discussing. It has the smallest overall budget—£500,000 means far more to Castle Point than it does to Harlow or Gloucestershire. The cap is to be kept on, but—hey presto!—Castle Point is being allowed to spend £500,000 of capital receipts not for the purposes that the Chancellor proclaimed in his autumn statement—creating jobs and building houses—but on redundancies. That is the ultimate perversion of economic policy: capital being spent, not to create jobs, but to destroy them.

No system of central Government control over local spending is acceptable in a democracy, but what makes this control all the more outrageous is the fact that it is based on the so-called system of standing spending assessments, which are capricious, incomprehensible, unfair and politically biased. The system makes Westminster, Kensington, Chelsea and Cheltenham more deprived than Hartlepool, Barking, Walsall and Stoke. It makes no allowance for long-term unemployment or for the incidence of ill health.

The system has preposterous consequences. It has been damned by the Audit Commission, especially for the way in which the SSAs are now used for purposes for which they were never intended. Today they are used, as the Audit Commission report "Passing the Buck" pointed out, to distribute 80 per cent. of total local authority spending. The system was designed at a time when less than 50 per cent. was distributed in this way. Today, the system is used to exert central control over total local government expenditure, but it was never designed for that purpose.

Ministers admit that the system is flawed. That is why the Minister said that the Government are setting up a review, but the last thing he will do is make it independent. The Government know that if a fair system of SSAs were established, we would end the jobbery inherent in the system which results in local authorities such as Westminster and Wandsworth benefiting unreasonably at the expense of other authorities that need the money.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): Is my hon. Friend aware that if Labour-controlled Gateshead council had been given the same SSA as Westminster, as this year it would have been able to set a zero council tax for the next two years; or that if Labour-controlled Newcastle city council had been given the same SSA as Wandsworth, far from setting a zero rate, it would have been able to give council tax payers money? Is he confident that the system will be corrected under the so-called review?

Mr. Straw: I am sorry to tell my hon. Friend that I have no such confidence. Wandsworth received, in addition to the usual largesse, £30 million of transitional relief. That amounted to one tenth of the relief for the entire country—enough to plant flowers, not just on every roundabout in Gateshead, but beside every road in the country. The hon. Member for Harlow has not complained about that.

Shorn of all its economic mumbo-jumbo, the Conservative case for capping comes down to claims that central Government have—I quote from their consultative document—

"the duty to protect local taxpayers from unacceptably high bills."

In February, the former Secretary of State said:

"we must . . . hold faith with the local taxpayers, for whom capping is an important protection."—[*Official Report*, 3 February 1993; Vol. 218, c. 342.]

In the debate on 3 February, the hon. Member for Harlow said:

"The whole point of the cap is to protect the people in Harlow."—[*Official Report*, 3 February 1993; Vol. 218, c. 356.]

There is some profound arrogance for the House to digest. What happens if people in Harlow, Gloucestershire or even Castle Point take a different view from the self-appointed guardians of their purses in Whitehall and Westminster? Are people to be allowed a say about whether they want protection, or will they get it whether or not they ask for it?

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): We do want it.

Mr. Straw: The hon. Member for Lloyd's says that they do want it. The local elections last month were fought on the issue of which party gave value for money and decent services. There is no better witness to that than the press notice from the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler), who is the chairman of the Conservative party when he is not directing Group 4. He said:

"For once, I am happy to agree with Labour. The decisive factor in this campaign should be which party will provide local services at the lowest cost to local people."

We fought the campaign on that issue, and the Conservative party got its answer on 7 May. Across the country Conservative policies and Conservative capping were decisively rejected by voters. In Gloucestershire the Conservative party lost 13 seats. In one night, it went from being the largest party to being the smallest. In Essex, the Conservatives lost 25 seats.

Mr. Marland: No.

Mr. Straw: That is right. We understand the hon. Gentleman's problems and do not want to intrude on his private grief. Obviously, he has so many problems on his mind that he has not bothered to look at the Library brief or read the local paper.

The rout was even more dramatic in Essex where, as I have said, the Conservatives lost 25 seats. Labour went from being the smallest party to becoming the largest. Nowhere was the election more closely fought than in Harlow, thanks to the forensic skills of the hon. Member for Harlow. He fought against the district council's record and in favour of capping. As a result, the Conservatives in Harlow were wiped out. They lost their one remaining seat.

The people in Gloucestershire and Essex have spoken. They do not want the protection of this incompetent and politically corrupt Government. They do not want capping. They want decent services, and they are ready to pay for them. The new Secretary of State is keen on morality in taxation. Perhaps he will remember that the legitimate case for capping was crushed on 7 May. Capping is undemocratic and will lead, as it has already led, to the loss of thousands of jobs. It will harm many innocent people. It is an abuse of power by a contemptible Government, and it must and will be opposed. We shall vote against it.

[Mr. Straw]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There are 56 minutes remaining for this debate and no fewer than eight hon. Members, including Front-Bench spokesmen, hope to catch my eye. With co-operation on the length of speeches, all hon. Members who wish to speak may be successful. It is up to hon. Members themselves.

11.3 pm

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): It is wondrous to follow the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) who is the magician of the Opposition because he never fails when he appears with his top hat to bring out a dead rabbit. What he said sums up very well the position in Harlow. The hon. Gentleman said that at the local elections the people of Harlow were talking about this wicked Government and their capping. He was probably worried about more important matters—such as the crisis over the leadership of his party, the unions and perhaps his re-election to the shadow Cabinet—and overlooked one or two basic issues.

Here are the facts. There was a swing to the Conservatives in Harlow of 2·1 per cent.—probably the only place in the whole country, apart from Buckinghamshire. *[Interruption.]* We are talking about democracy, but the Opposition do not want to listen to the facts. There was a swing against Labour of 4·3 per cent., which says it all. The people of Harlow will be very grateful—*[Interruption.]* Opposition Members are not prepared to listen. What a great shame, especially considering that the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) trained for the priesthood.

The overwhelming majority of people in Harlow will be delighted if we have capping, given that the Labour-controlled council spent £24 million last year. The council blew its reserves because it thought, whimsically, that Labour would win the general election and bail it out. Nothing was left. From where was it all going to come? The people of Harlow. People in band C would have to pay more than £800 and people in band D more than £1,000. I have received hundreds of letters from pensioners on very low incomes just above income support who would have to pay £1,400 a year, and for what? That is what depresses me most of all.

The hon. Member for Blackburn is an Essex man; he lives just down the road from where I used to live. He knows Essex and the people of Harlow—*[Interruption.]* I still live in Essex, 20 minutes up the road from him. If the hon. Member for Leeds, West would pay attention and listen, he might learn something.

The Opposition support what the council did in Harlow. Four years ago, it spent £28,000 on flowers for one roundabout. It was not for the whole of Harlow, but for one roundabout. At the time, the council was saying that it had to close old people's homes and reduce provision for old people. The hon. Member for Blackburn would not answer questions about that, because he was too ashamed. The council closed down the citizens advice bureau, yet it spent £130,000 on a photocopier. *[Interruption.]*

I am sorry that Opposition Front-Bench Members find it funny. I find it sad, because jobs are going to be lost because of the incompetence of Harlow council. The Labour-controlled council was warned 10 years ago by me and by Tory councillors that it should bring in advisers to see where expenditure could be gradually brought down. The council ignored that advice, not at its peril but at the peril of hundreds of workers in Harlow. I regard that as an utter disgrace.

I have spoken on many occasions in the House about the legendary incompetence of Harlow council and I will not go back to that now. We are debating the spending cap, but the crisis in Harlow is due to the incompetence of the ruling Labour group, whose idea of prudent financial policy was to meet more than half its revenue spending during the past three years from reserves and interest and to carry on spending at four times its standard spending assessment until the money ran out.

The ruling Labour group had no strategy for meeting a 55 per cent. hole in its income this year. It deliberately created the crisis by totally exhausting its reserves last year; it is now trying to blackmail the Government and national and local taxpayers into picking up the tab for its mistakes. Even if there were no cap for small councils this year, Harlow would be facing the same crisis—a massive 55 per cent. reduction in its income to meet revenue spending and no means of filling it, except by robbing its own citizens, particularly pensioners.

What is the ruling group's attitude to collecting local tax? A recent survey showed that Harlow was the ninth worst council for collecting the community charge and that it has the 352nd worst performance in providing information about the council tax. The council's excuse was, "Perhaps we weren't ready." All credit to Harlow council for considering ways of improving the collection of the poll tax—but it did that on the very day that the last instalment was due, so it was a worthless exercise.

The first person in Harlow to be prosecuted for non-payment of the poll tax was the council's leader, Mr. Richard Howitt, who might be listening to this speech or might read it. I suppose that he has done the most sensible thing——

Mr. Marland: Moved to Wandsworth.

Mr. Hayes: No, but he wants to move to Europe. He has put forward his name as a European Parliament candidate; he is the original Euro-evacuee—not that he will be elected, of course.

Labour-controlled Harlow council did not send out its council tax bills until after the local elections. In view of the figures that I gave the House, I wonder why. Its bills were the highest in the country and were sent out two months after those of everyone else.

Harlow's bills were two and a half times higher than the next highest, five times higher than the average for Labour-controlled district councils, six times higher than the average for all district councils and seven times higher than the average for Conservative-controlled councils. Harlow had to inflate its bills by nearly 60 per cent. to cover uncollected community charges. Caring, Labour-controlled Harlow council responded to that crisis of its own making—I hope that Labour Members do not laugh at this—by increasing its income by introducing an extra charge of £5 per week on the frail and elderly who live in warden-assisted, sheltered accommodation.

Harlow argues that it must maintain spending at four times its standard spending assessment because of the recession, and then expects those paying council tax to be immune from the same recession to meet band C bills nearly 50 per cent. higher than last year, when inflation is

running at 1·3 per cent. The council has the audacity to include in its special pleading the statement that the business rate on its own properties increased this year, yet in all its propaganda and meetings with Ministers, there was not one word of consideration about the impact of a 50 per cent. increase in local taxation on local people.

The council persuaded one of its pet trade unions, the National Association of Local Government Officers, to stump up £2,000 for a totally bogus report. It employs a policy unit at a cost of £1 million a year but ignores its special advisers. I refer in particular to the council's treasurer, who warned that the use of reserves at the current rate would exhaust the general reserve by 31 March 1993. The council did a courageous thing—it sacked him. He is gone.

We hear a great deal from Labour about democracy, and from the shadow Secretary of State about letting the people have their say. Recently, Harlow's controlling Labour group tried to gag Conservative and Liberal Democratic councillors by unilaterally removing their voting rights on committees.

Mr. Mackinlay: They are not allowed to do that.

Mr. Hayes: The hon. Gentleman has said something sensible, and I hope that it will be recorded in Harlow. For the sake of *Hansard*, the hon. Gentleman said that they are not allowed. Of course not, but that is the sort of arrogance we have come to expect. That is precisely what was done—I have the letters to prove the truth of that, if the hon. Gentleman wants to dispute it. I am delighted that, in a few moments, we shall have the great joy of hearing from the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay). Essex holds its breath.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Has my hon. Friend noticed the phenomenon that Labour councillors in opposition always believe in open government, whereas Labour councillors in power believe in secrecy?

Mr. Hayes: My hon. Friend is entirely right about the arrogance and corruption of power. There is no excuse for telling councillors in opposition that they do not have the right to vote, but that is precisely what Harlow council has done.

Thurrock has a standard spending assessment of £87·27 per head, while poor old Harlow has a miserly and unfair £103·37 per head. As for revenue support grant, Thurrock receives £28·74 in tax, while hard-done-by Harlow must scrape by with only £45 per head. Perhaps, when he is given his turn, the hon. Member for Thurrock will tell us how on earth his local authority manages to provide services with such amazingly low levels of support, and why Harlow cannot.

Harlow council spends £19,000 every year examining its daft proposal for eight mini-town halls. It is called democracy in decentralisation. The council obtains its advice from Dr. Derek Hawes, of the school for advanced urban studies at Bristol university. I have known Dr. Hawes for many years; for more than 27 years he ran housing splendidly in Harlow. He is a good local government officer, and I suspect that until 10 minutes ago he was advising Harlow council.

I sought Dr. Hawes's advice, because he knows more about the government of Harlow than anyone in it. In a letter to me, he wrote:

"As to Harlow: the first thing is to say that it is perfectly feasible to produce good and efficient local services for a budget of £11·5 millions, if only they would accept that they should do the basics well and cut the extravagances . . . In the medium term they need to dispose of the housing stock in a series of planned disposals to housing associations, perhaps retaining the sheltered service and developing the 'enabling' and care-in-the-community dimensions. On the assumption that a unitary authority is formed in due course, covering a wider area of West Essex, this would be an important ingredient in developing care services with Health and Social Service agencies."

That says it all. That man effectively ran housing and social services in Harlow for 27 years; he is an expert in local government, and advises on local government; he advises Harlow council. He says that what the Government are doing for £11·8 million can be done well for £11·5 million. I commend the motion to the House.

11.17 pm

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): We must not only consider the three councils that are the primary subject of the order; as my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) pointed out, every local authority is affected by it, because if the House rejected it tonight, authorities up and down the country would be liberated and allowed, in subsequent years, to fix the budgets they considered appropriate to promote and protect their communities. Therefore, a great deal is at stake.

Among the local authorities that are not included in the order, but are nevertheless affected by the capping regime, is my own council, Thurrock—referred to earlier by the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes). It has struggled and is suffering; it had to make painful decisions in order to achieve a budget below the capping limit. I commend the political courage and judgment of Councillor Jimmy Aberdein and Thurrock's controlling group—and, indeed, the many Labour-controlled councils up and down the country that have had to make similar painful, heart-breaking decisions to come within the capping limit.

The Minister has said that he is prepared to look again at the formula by which standard spending assessments are arrived at. It is my council's view that it has been denied, because of the existing Government formula, something like £3·5 million. The formula is an absurd, unfair and crude mechanism which has been adopted by the Government in order to arrive at the standard spending assessments, with all their discrimination in favour of some of the councils controlled by their friends and to the disadvantage of many other councils, including areas which are poor, such as my own area of Thurrock in Essex.

Before I move away from Thurrock, I want to point out that my council covers a relatively poor area. Its people, are being deprived of the benefits which would have accrued from their council's innovation and enterprise in conceiving such developments as Lakeside, had the Government not altered the rating system. Thurrock ratepayers would have been advantaged by many millions of pounds had the system not been tampered with. It is a great loss to a poor area when its people cannot benefit from the enterprise and initiative shown by the Labour-controlled Thurrock council. They have been robbed.

The hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) referred to my council and tried to compare it with his own, but it is like trying to compare an apple with an orange. One of the things that he should recognise after representing Harlow for so many years is that Harlow is quite different from some other areas because it is a new town. The broad

[Mr. Andrew Mackinlay]

thrust of the grounds for the appeal which the Minister spurned and which was submitted by Harlow council on behalf of Harlow people was that new towns have special problems.

There was also an unspoken but implied contract between Governments, both Conservative and Labour, which created, supported and sustained new towns with the people they sought to attract to live in them. There was a commitment that residents would be able to enjoy pleasant and healthy surroundings, attractive places in which to bring up their children and in which to retire. Such a quality of life was part of the deal in encouraging those people to come and spend their lives in the new towns. It is that contract, that concordat, that the Government are ratting on tonight by the order which will cap Harlow.

Mr. Rooker: My hon. Friend reminds me of one of my visits to Harlow a couple of years before the general election, when I was dealing with community care for the Opposition. Harlow council had put in place one of the finest day care centres that I saw in the whole of the country. Yet Harlow was not a social services authority. It had been forced to provide it because Essex county council did not wish to do so. It is one shining example of what Harlow did for its residents above and beyond its statutory duty, to meet a need that was not provided for by the then Tory-controlled county council.

Mr. Mackinlay: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, because he makes a point that needs to be reiterated tonight. Harlow's Labour council was using what limited powers it had to supplement the deficient services provided from Chelmsford by the Conservative-controlled Essex county council. I hope that in future that will be remedied, but the Conservative Essex county council was denying important and essential services to people in Harlow and in other parts of the county, including my own borough of Thurrock.

Mr. Hayes: If that were true, why is it that Harlow Labour party did not send a deputation to Essex county council to ask for those services until December 1992?

Mr. Mackinlay: I do not know where the hon. Member has been, but the Labour party throughout the county of Essex has been protesting about the acute deficiencies of the county council's services and the fact that it has been spending way below even this mean Government's assessment of an appropriate level of spending. Those Conservative county councillors have been found out and discredited. The Conservatives who hitherto controlled Essex county council have been rejected by the electorate.

I am deeply concerned about the high level of unemployment in Essex. It will be aggravated by the capping of Harlow and Castle Point, where many of my constituents work. The level of unemployment in Harlow is at an unprecedented level, and it will be made worse by the hon. Member for Harlow going into the Lobby tonight to support the Government's capping of his local authority. He will be faced with the charge that his performance tonight resulted in additional unemployment in his constituency and throughout the county of Essex.

New towns are unique. They were designed to be attractive. An important feature of new towns is their open spaces, with flowers and trees, and their areas for recreation. This capping order will result in those features having to be neglected. The hon. Member for Harlow rubbished the fact that Harlow had decided that it was appropriate to allocate some money for the provision of flowers. Expenditure of that kind has always been implicit in the concept, design and ethos of new towns.

The age balance in new towns is, by their very nature, distorted. Harlow in particular will have to face the fact that it has a higher than average aging population. Homelessness there is increasing, due to the inability of the council to build homes for families to rent. The nature of new towns always was that they should be allowed to develop so that children brought up there could stay there. Homelessness, however, is rising in Harlow, and it will be aggravated further by the order.

Tragically, extensive leisure facilities will be lost. They serve not only the people of Harlow but those who live elsewhere in Essex and in Hertfordshire, including people who reside in Conservative-controlled areas and who legitimately use Harlow's recreation and leisure facilities.

In view of what the hon. Member for Harlow said, it is fair to place on record the fact that Harlow council has been highly commended for its efficiency by a number of important agencies. The council has recognised the political reality that the Government have put a pistol to its head. Over the past three years, therefore, it has made efficiency savings of £2 million, even though, since 1979, the people of Harlow have been denied resources amounting to about £31 million, due to the Government's rate support grant machinations. The capping limit which is being dictated to the council tonight means that its budget will in reality be nearer £9·5 million, rather than the £11,800,000 that is stated in the order. The consequences will be devastating for many people who live in that area.

The decrease in concessionary fare facilities will lead to the use of buses going down while fares go up. That will have a knock-on effect. I have referred already to the loss of recreational facilities. Play schemes, swimming pools, day centres for the elderly and handicapped and centres that give help and advice to families will also be closed. That is a tragedy, and ultimately the charge for those losses must be laid against the hon. Member for Harlow.

Trevor Brooking, a former captain of England football team and an Essex resident, said of Harlow council:

> "I was very impressed by the quality, range and level of sporting and recreational facilities provided by Harlow Council. I am concerned for the future well-being of local people, should services be cut as a result of reduced finance."

That should be fully understood by the House. We should also take into account the general attitude of Conservatives in Harlow, whom I see represented by the Trojan horse, the hon. Member for Harlow, who has betrayed the people of the town.

The minority Conservative group in Harlow produced a bogus alternative budget, which no doubt it sent to the Secretary of State. Not only is it ill informed, but it is without substance. Had the council implemented that so-called alternative budget, it would have been acting illegally, as the budget excluded provision for debt charges and other unavoidable charges. Despite that, the so-called alternative budget exceeded the capping limit by about £1 million.

Meeting the limit would have required 85 per cent. cuts in the voluntary sector, closure of family centres and a reduction in many other important amenities. When the

record of this debate is read in Harlow, I hope that residents will realise that not even Tory councillors were able to meet the Government's unreasonable criteria, as reflected in the orders.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) challenged the Government and the hon. Member for Harlow to show their mandate for supporting the order. They have not been able to answer the fact that, for almost three decades, Labour has been returned to control Harlow council, and that, as recently as a few weeks ago, it was overwhelmingly supported in the county council elections. It is a painful fact that the hon. Member for Harlow was elected on 9 April 1992, but he was elected on a bogus prospectus, which we debated and exposed earlier today. Many Conservative Members were elected on a false and dishonest—or, to use a parliamentary word, fraudulent—programme.

Another area must be mentioned. It will not have escaped your attention, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that, rather unusually, and no doubt to the embarrassment of the Government, one of the orders is against Castle Point, which is a Conservative-controlled council. Indeed, it has been under Conservative control since the time of the ark. It is being capped tonight. It is not unreasonable for hon. Members to ask why. From a sedentary position, when the Minister was speaking, I shouted out, "Why has this cap been imposed?" I do not know whether it was recorded by the *Official Report*, but the Minister said that it was the fault of the treasurer.

That was breathtaking and somewhat cowardly, especially as the treasurer cannot defend his position here. The Minister did not take account of the comments of the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), who said earlier today, "I am astonished how we in this place blame public officials for the decisions that we politicians take."

If something is wrong at Castle Point—I assume that there is, or we should not be debating the order—we have a right to full disclosure of what has gone wrong and who is to blame. I look forward to hearing the hon. Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink). One cannot escape the fact that ultimately Conservative councillors must be to blame for the shambles at Castle Point. I hope that the House will receive a full and frank disclosure. If that is not forthcoming, there should be an independent inquiry into what has happened there.

I hope that the House will agree that the order is unfair and inappropriate and that it discriminates against ordinary people. It is time that the House rejected capping. We should also reject the order to send out a message of hope, that there will be a change in the local government regime in the not too distant future.

11.35 pm

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): I am saddened by the fact that I have to speak tonight because Gloucestershire county council need never have been charged-capped as there are many other options available to it.

I am sad for the schoolchildren of Gloucestershire because the axe will fall on them as a result of the Liberal-Labour mishmash of government. It is a disgrace that the Liberal-Labour coalition intends the axe to fall on the 4,200 teachers in Gloucestershire. Gloucestershsire county council employs 5,800 non-teaching staff but the huge reduction will not be made among their number.

The appalling situation in Gloucestershire has arisen not in the past few years but in the past eight years since the Conservatives left office. Horrendous debts have built up. They have risen from a mere £25 million to £125 million under the Labour-Liberal coalition. It now costs £1 million a month to service those debts.

Mr. Knapman: Will my hon. friend confirm that, within a very short space of time, the Liberal Democrat administration has, in addition to increasing the debts by about £100 million, run down substantial cash balances and often spent a considerable amount of money against the advice of council officers? Will he also confirm that the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) was one of the county councillors and that he bears a considerable personal responsibility for tonight's sad necessity?

Mr. Marland: I thank my hon. Friend warmly for his intervention. It saves me making the next section of my speech as he said exactly what I was going to say. The Liberal-Labour record on Gloucestershire county council is utterly shameful.

The capping comes as no surprise to Conservative Members because it is the second year that Gloucestershire county council has gone over budget and appealed to the Department of the Environment, supported by all Members of Parliament for the area. No effort was spared. It is the second year that the Government have carefully examined the situation in Gloucestershire and considered a variety of reports which have been produced in an effort to justify the county council's overspending. The council has been found wanting.

It is the second year that Gloucestershire county council has done nothing to help itself when there is much that it could do. It is also the second year that the citizens of Gloucester will have to pick up a bill for £600,000 for rebilling by the district council. The citizens will of course relish the £55 reduction for each household, but the Labour-Liberal coalition has a shameful record. All the other county councils can live within their budgets, so why cannot Gloucestershire county council?

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Tell us about Lloyd's.

Mr. Marland: That remark was totally out of place. The hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) knows what it is like to be swindled by what seems to be a respectable organisation, and I respect what he has done to help investors in the Bank of Credit and Commerce International. Precisely the same thing has happened to me and to thousands of other investors at Lloyd's, and I shall use my best offices to ensure that justice is done.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East) *rose*——

Mr. Marland: I shall not give way, because this is a debate about charge capping, not about financial services. I mentioned the subject only because the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) goaded me with it.

To be constructive, I ask what Gloucestershire county council should do now and in the future. First, it should drop the ridiculous idea of a judicial review. That would simply cost the citizens of Gloucestershire more money, and I do not believe that it would get them anywhere.

[Mr. Marland]

Secondly, the council should re-examine its plan to lay off 150 teachers, and look to the 5,800 non-teaching staff for the redundancies.

Thirdly, Gloucestershire should make a plan to reduce its debts. As I have already said, the council has £125 million-worth of debts—but it also has £500 million-worth of assets. It should liquidate 20 per cent. of its assets and pay its debts. Gloucestershire owns 8,000 acres of agricultural land. Why does a county council need that sort of agricultural holding? It should sell it and pay the debts. Gloucestershire is the only county in the country that cannot live within the guidelines laid down by the Government.

What should the Government do? They, too, should play a part in putting Gloucestershire on the straight and narrow for the future. I am glad that they are undertaking a review of standard spending assessments, and I am confident that it will be deep and thorough. I believe that the Government should consider the area coast adjustments, too, to find out whether any extra money could come to Gloucestershire under those auspices. They should also compare Gloucestershire's lot with that of Oxfordshire, Devon, Warwickshire and all the other counties that Liberal and Labour councillors in Gloucestershire are always saying get a much better deal. That is probably not true, but I should like to be reassured that the claim has been thoroughly examined.

The sad thing about the capping is that the children will be the losers. I hope that the responsibility for that will hang heavily not only tonight but in the future on the shoulders of Opposition Members who seek to decry and belittle what is done by Conservatives. The guilty councillors are members of Opposition parties, and Opposition parties bear the blame for what is going wrong in Gloucestershire. Gloucestershire councillors have brought the mess upon their own heads. As my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) said, they have disregarded the sensible advice of their chief officers and ended up in the situation in which they find themselves tonight.

There is now no alternative. Like my hon. Friends the other Members for Gloucestershire constituencies, I have received many letters complaining about the profligacy of Gloucestershire county council, and the people of Gloucestershire will welcome the £55 reduction for each household in the county. Last year the county council was given a little extra money on the understanding that it would put its house in order. Unfortunately, it did not do so. The capping is the inevitable result of persistent overspending by the representatives of Opposition parties who sit on Gloucestershire county council.

Tonight my thoughts are with the children, with the families in Gloucestershire who have small children at school. They are the people who will bear the brunt of this folly, so it is with a heavy heart that I shall endorse the capping.

11.44 pm

Mr. Nigel Jones (Cheltenham): I welcome the Minister and Secretary of State to their new jobs.

Capping represents a denial of local democracy. Because of the shortage of time, I shall not comment on Harlow or Castle Point. I want to concentrate on Gloucestershire because I live there and I have three children in state schools there.

In Gloucestershire, we had a referendum in the county council elections on 6 May. People were asked to make an important choice: did they want capping or not; did they want cuts in services or not; and if they did not want cuts, were they prepared to pay a little more for a decent level of services? The answer came back loud and clear: no cuts. In my constituency, where there are 13 county council divisions, only one Conservative clung on to her seat, with a majority of just 94 votes. In the constituency of the hon. Member for Gloucester (Mr. French), just one Conservative member held his seat, with a majority of six votes. In the constituency of the hon. Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland), not a single Conservative was returned. Occupying the 63 seats, there are now 30 Liberal Democrats, 20 Labour representatives, only 10 Conservatives and three independents.

Having been so roundly defeated, what did the Tories do after the election? Did they scuttle away to their little hole? No. They voted to put in a Labour chairman and vice-chairman of the county council. When Conservative canvassers knock on the doors in Gloucestershire next time, asking for votes to defeat socialism, we will know what to say to them: "Pull the other one, comrade."

Gloucestershire's budget problems are recent. The 1991-92 budget, set by a minority Liberal Democrat administration, was at SSA. It was not capped. It involved some very difficult decisions, which I, among others, had to make—£7·8 million of savings, or cuts. The administration that followed the minority Liberal Democrat administration was a very curious beast—a Conservative-Labour alliance. We call it a "Lab-a-Tory" pact. That administration set the 1992-93 budget, which was capped. After the appeal, the Minister allowed us £2·59 million more on spending. This year, the 1993-94 budget was proposed by Conservative councillors and seconded by Labour councillors. It was £10·3 million above the cap. The Government are now reinforcing that cap with the help of the hon. Member for Gloucestershire, West and others.

The Secretary of State has acted unreasonably and in bad faith. In November, the previous Secretary of State accepted that Gloucestershire should have an increase of 3·4 per cent. When the final spending limits were announced, he limited Gloucestershire to an increase of 1·8 per cent.; yet we have heard from the Minister tonight that the average increase is 3·1 per cent. So why are the Government penalising Gloucestershire? They allowed Bedfordshire 3·5 per cent., Kent 5·2 per cent., East Sussex 7·6 per cent., and West Sussex a massive 10·1 per cent. increase. Why has Gloucestershire been given only a 1·8 per cent. increase?

The hon. Member for Gloucestershire, West says that the council has excessive debts of £121 million. I find that very hard to take from a supporter of a Government who are borrowing more than that every day of the week. Gloucestershire's borrowings are not out of line—they are not significantly above the national average. Moreover, every penny of its borrowings was authorised by the Government with the backing and the vote of the hon. Member for Gloucestershire, West. So, on closer examination, we find that his criticism is sheer hypocrisy.

How does the Minister justify to parents increasing class sizes and damaging the education of

Gloucestershire's children? Gloucestershire is one of the lowest spenders per pupil; it is 76th out of 102 on primary education, 100th out of 101—bottom but one—on secondary education. Why do the Government think that it costs less to educate children in Gloucestershire than anywhere else? How does the Minister explain the gap in funding for the local police? The Home Secretary tells our chief constable that he can employ 1,184 officers, but there is not enough money in the capped budget to do it. That means that 40 officer posts and 73 civilian posts will be held vacant when we have a crime wave and regular invasions on new-age travellers. It is utter lunacy. Do not Government Departments talk to each other?

How does the Minister think that we are going to pull Britain out of recession when, by this action today, the Government will make 250 people in Gloucestershire redundant, more than half of them teachers? Why have the Government ignored the people of Gloucestershire? Why have they ignored the 25,000 parents who signed a petition against the cuts, which was presented to No. 10 Downing street? I think that I know why. It is because they see no sense, they hear no sense, and they speak no sense. Their ears have healed over. They are not a new user-friendly, listening Government; they are the same old crew, shuffling around and sinking into a morass of their own making. The people of Gloucestershire are paying the price of the Government's incompetence.

What will the four Gloucestershire Conservative Members do tonight? Are they going to go down the children of Gloucestershire and vote to cut Gloucestershire's police force? If they do, they might as well close down the Conservative office, because the people of Gloucestershire will never forgive them.

11.50 pm

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): I welcome the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) and the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) to environmental matters. We all look forward to their future contributions and especially to those by the Secretary of State, to see what the learning curve has meant to him since he was so firmly committed to the poll tax some time ago.

It is unfortunate that we do not have longer to debate these matters. There has clearly been great interest by hon. Members as important issues are at stake. Perhaps, in future, Government managers will consider allocating a similar period to that which was allocated in 1990. Nevertheless, in a short time, we have had a good debate.

The Minister said that he believes that the council tax is fair. He is new to the job. When he takes a little time to understand the issues, he will find that that is not the view to many people, especially people at the bottom end, on bands A and B, who find that they are paying only a third of the council tax of people in large castles. They do not believe that it is fair. Single people in particular who are in band A and B homes find that they have a very raw deal.

The Minister said also that he intended to review the standard spending assessment system. There is a large job to do. The Minister has to explain why areas on Tyneside that, on any estimation, are deprived are not given the same rating as Wandsworth or Westminster, and why Huntingdon is considered to be more deprived than Chester.

We had a theatrical performance from the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes). He condemned the flower-planting in his borough. It is interesting that in a previous debate on this subject he supported the publicly owned theatre in his borough. His contribution might have been a rehearsal for the Christmas pantomime. If he is asked to play a part, he will be known as Dame Interflora. It ill becomes the hon. Gentleman to criticise the job losses that have occurred because of the actions that have been forced on his council. His Government have caused the loss of thousands of jobs in the manufacturing sector in an important town in Essex.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) explained the real reasons why the order should be opposed. It should be opposed because it is undemocratic. The Government say that they want to give power to people locally. They have harped on about that ever since they were elected in 1979. Capping regulations do the very opposite, because they deny local people the right to decide the services that they want in their borough and how much they are prepared to pay for them. My hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn also pointed out that even if the capping regulations are intended to reduce the level of expenditure, they do not work, as the London school of economics survey has shown.

We also had an interesting contribution from my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay). He pointed out that capping is not only about the three councils mentioned in the order; it is about all councils throughout the country that face cuts in jobs and cuts in services. The Opposition are against capping orders because they are hypocrisy from a Government who said that they wanted to make peace with local government. We are against such orders because they reveal a lack of democracy. We are against such orders because of the consequences for jobs and for services. We are against the order tonight because it will not work.

11.54 pm

Mr. Curry: By leave of the House, I thank the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), whose area has a standard spending assessment of £143 a head, for his good wishes for the area with an SSA of £86·98 per head, which is slightly below that of Thurrock. That disposes of the suggestion of political bias in the SSA system. The figure for Newcastle is £749 per head. I do not resent that. I started my professional career in Newcastle on the *Newcastle Journal* and I look forward to further visits to that part of the world.

The speech by the hon. Member for Blackburn was extremely entertaining. His misfortune was that I rather than my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was dealing with the debate. He had a magnificent compilation of all my right hon. Friend's past philosophy. Clearly I shall warn him in future so that he can learn "On Ilkley moor baht 'at", which may be more appropriate in the circumstances.

The Opposition's great tragedy is that there are only three councils for them to talk about because 416 were able to accept the capping criteria. They would have loved legions of councils to debate, but there are only three. How the Opposition milked them! They painted a Guernica-like picture for Gloucestershire, with people dying in the streets because of the cap. If all that is so bad, how was it that when, last year, we relaxed the cap for Gloucestershire by

[Mr. Curry]

£2·6 million, which was apparently needed for essential services, £1·4 million was put back into reserves at the end of the year? I find that extremely difficult to understand.

What is most important is the Opposition's attitude to public expenditure which came out of the debate. The philosophy of the hon. Member for Blackburn is "Let it rip". Clearly, his vision of virtue is spending. Time and again he praised councils because they spent and spent and spent. He then said that no system of central control over local spending was acceptable. Now we know. If there is ever a Labour Government, they will let it rip. All their friends in the town halls will say, "Come on, sign the cheques. We shall fill them in." That is the policy that the Labour party has just enunciated.

The hon. Member for Blackburn prayed in aid Germany and the United States, which were very selective examples. If he had looked at some systems that are not federal, such as those in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands and Italy, or even at the past remarks of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), he would have found that the capping of local authority expenditure is regarded as an essential component in the control of public expenditure.

What we are doing is saving the taxpayer, the one person who was never mentioned by the Opposition. The taxpayers deserve our consideration. We should safeguard the nation's finances and ensure that we get efficient and effective local government. That is permitted and that is perfectly possible under this system. It is something that local authorities are finding——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business).*

The House divided: Ayes 292, Noes 240.

Division No. 293] **[11.58 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm

Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Faichett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Andrew Mackinlay and
Mr. Allan Meale.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 7th June, be approved.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point) *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You are the defender of Back Benchers' rights in the House. You will know that we have been debating the cap tonight, so it is perhaps appropriate that I should wear the cap to raise a point of order. How can I represent my constituents? Will you advocate to Madam Speaker that she should choose me to put my council's case in an Adjournment debate next week?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a question for me to answer. I strongly suspect that the hon. Gentleman knows the procedures of the House full well and how to apply for an Adjournment debate.

Beach Safety

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

12.11 am

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): It is always a privilege to secure an Adjournment debate. It is a special privilege for me on this occasion, because 10 years ago to the hour, I was first elected to Parliament.

The subject of the debate relates directly to my constituency with its holiday resorts, its 17 miles of coastline and, in particular, to its beaches. In my maiden speech on Thursday 30 June 1983, I quoted from a reference to Margate in Kent, which was described in 1780 as

"a place of gaiety and dissipation".

It was in Margate that the "discreet bathing machine" was introduced and bathing, discreet or otherwise, has been taking place from Margate's main sands and coves since that time.

I am fortunate to represent a constituency that offers holidaymakers a safe and well-managed beach, comparing favourably with the best in Europe. However, other beaches on our coastline are less well managed, less hospitable, and much less safe.

As I have implied, British families have for generations enjoyed going to the beach. Buckets and spades, sand castles and swimming are part of this country's leisure heritage—a heritage that survives the alternative lure of the sun and cheap booze of the Mediterranean. But, sadly, every year families are devastated when a tragic accident turns summer holiday fun into fatality.

British beaches can be dangerous, and not just because of heavy surf or sudden changes in wave and weather conditions. Unexpectedly steep underwater gradients and racing tides can lurk beneath deceptively calm seas. It is not only the reckless and the non-swimmers who get caught out.

In the 10 years that I have served my constituents in this House, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents has consistently shown coastal drownings at 20 per cent. of the 500 total drownings per year in the United Kingdom. Last year, 149 drownings took place at our seasides, and to that figure must be added some 3,000 rescues—or near misses, if you will. That total of fatalities and incidents —accidents on cliffs and shoreline, sailboards, small craft and inflatables involving coastguard and lifeguard interventions—is far too high and demands co-ordinated action.

The most recent survey of beach safety provision took place in the summer of 1990, when a safety expert from the Royal Life Saving Society, United Kingdom, the principal provider of lifeguard training and the United Kingdom's leading drowning prevention agency, visited 51 beaches in Britain. He looked at the large and popular resort beaches where the large number of visitors using the beach in season makes the provision for the safety of bathers particularly important. His findings were, to say the least, disturbing.

Each site was graded according to the measures taken by the operators to protect the general public. On that basis, the survey found that more than 50 per cent. of the sites visited were judged as having inadequate provisions for beach safety, and only one site was judged an excellent beach.

For example, all manner of coloured flags fly on our beaches supposedly to indicate water conditions, but with no clear explanation of their meaning. In Brighton, for instance, a royal blue flag was raised to announce safe bathing, which in other places may be advertised by green, yellow or chequered flags. There is no standard system operating within Britain, and the significance of warning flags must therefore be lost on the general public.

Information offered on the beach or by local tourist offices is often obscure and inadequate. No beach operator can eliminate natural tides or currents, but it is seldom easy for visitors to obtain clear information about these hazards, and at half the sites visited by the Royal Life Saving Society warning signs were non-existent, poorly placed or misleading.

On many beaches, rescue equipment simply does not exist; on others the equipment that is provided is too heavy, outdated or badly placed. Reports cite examples of emergency telephones being nowhere near the beach or hidden behind sand dunes. Far too frequently, as we know from local experience, there is no clear separation of swimmers from the considerable hazards of water skiers, jet skis and wind surfers. Each sport has or should have its place.

Finally, and most important of all, far too few significant resort beaches offer the services of professional and properly trained life guards on duty when they are needed. We have all witnessed the bronzed Adonis who is more interested in eyeing up the talent on the beach than watching the toddlers on the water line.

Beach management is left to the discretion of the owner of the beach, whether it is a private owner or a local authority. The local authority has the power to make byelaws under the public health legislation relating to public bathing, and the owners have a moral duty of care under common law, but there is no statutory obligation, regulation or guideline. That is in sharp contrast to the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, which requires swimming pool managers to protect the safety of pool users as far as is reasonably practical. The result of the lack of regulation or co-ordination is that locally applied safety measures vary from beach to beach depending on whom it belongs to.

The need for national guidelines for public safety at the coast has been recognised for some time by the leading organisations. Last month, following consultations with local authorities, the police and coastal safety organisations the Royal Life Saving Society and RoSPA produced "Safety on British Beaches", which contains the first comprehensive guidelines for beach operators and for the safe management of beaches.

I am delighted that the Home Office was involved in the production of this document, and my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) as the Heritage Minister responsible for tourism, wrote the foreword to the guide and publicly launched it, recognising the need for

"A more uniform and consistent response to the hazards presented on British Beaches."

At present, aspects of safety are fragmented between the Department of Transport, responsible for coastguard service; the Department of the Environment, responsible for litter and other environmental matters, the Home Office, responsible for public safety and byelaws, and the Department of National Heritage, represented by my hon. Friend on the Front Bench tonight, with his responsibility for tourism and sports.

My hon. Friend, who I warmly welcome to the challenges of his new job, will not take it amiss when I say that, as a first step, it is important that responsibility for beach safety is co-ordinated within Government, and that Government lay down and monitor national minimum standards.

Her Majesty's Coastguard, which is part of the Department of Transport, has been empowered to develop local maritime water safety committees. The current written brief for those committees makes no reference to consultation with professional lifeguards who, with the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, are directly in contact with the public and most familiar with the dangers to which the public are exposed.

The coastguard held successful trials with lifeguard units, using its own dedicated channel zero. The result is that lifeguard units can communicate directly with Her Majesty's Coastguard in the event of an emergency, and are becoming integrated in the overall search-and-rescue network, involving also helicopters and in-shore lifeboats.

That excellent initiative needs to be extended from a trial to a nationwide service, with lifeguard units meeting minimum requirements jointly agreed by Royal Life Saving Society and Her Majesty's Coastguard-appointed "declared facilities". If the national search-and-rescue committee, responsible for the management of search and rescue around our coasts, is truly to review safety around our whole coast—on the beaches as well as at sea—it must ensure that the lifeguard's voice is represented and heard.

It will never be possible to make all our hundreds of delightful beaches and coves completely safe. To try would involve unrealistic expenditure of time, manpower and resources. It is possible, however, to provide information that tells the tourist which beach is guarded, patrolled, managed and safe and which is exposed, unguarded and hazardous. It is possible also to vary the hours of lifeguard work, so that groups need not huddle together at noon in the pouring rail, while leaving beaches busy but unprotected on long, hot summer evenings.

It is possible to provide, check and regularly maintain essential lifesaving equipment when and where it is likely to be needed, and to set a uniform standard for beach warning flags, standard professional qualifications for lifeguards, and standard and readily identifiable lifeguard uniforms. It is possible to introduce without undue regimentation zoning for water skiers, windsurfers and bathers.

For the price of some of those grotesque monuments to modern civic pride that litter our promenades to no useful purpose, and with a sense of seaside priorities, we could provide all that—even within limited budgets. It is possible to do all those things and to set standards that will attract visitors because of the security they offer—standards that we can then set as an example to the rest of Europe.

That makes sound economic sense; above all, it makes sense because it is possible to avert a significant number of the tragedies that strike holidaying families every summer. It is sobering on this summer night to remember that some of those statistics, which in real terms mean heartbroken and devastated homes, will already have been chalked up this year, and that more will certainly follow in the coming summer months.

My hon. Friend the Minister can institute action tonight that would definitely lead to an improvement. I urge him to start his new ministerial career by doing so.

12.22 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Iain Sproat): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) for raising an important issue tonight. I know that my predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key), had a strong personal interest in the safety of our beaches, and that he was pleased to attend the Royal Life Saving Society symposium on 25 May to launch new guidelines for safety on British beaches. I am delighted to continue where he left off, and to reply to my hon. Friend's Adjournment debate.

I welcome the initiative of the Royal Life Saving Society and of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents in producing their guidance document, "Safety on British Beaches". The Sports Council, English Tourist Board and Home Office were all consulted during its preparation. It gives operational guidelines for safe beach management, alerts operators to their responsibilities and to the range of safety options available to them, and seeks to engender a more uniform and consistent response to the hazards on British beaches. I am sure that it will prove helpful in raising safety standards.

My hon. Friend suggests that we should go further, and lay down a new structure of Government standards. He also suggests that there is a need for greater co-ordination within Government. I fully accept that a number of Departments have an interest in this policy area, and that a variety of regulatory mechanisms impact on beach safety. I believe that that is inevitable, given the range of activities taking place around our coastlines.

As I will describe shortly, my Department has two relevant policy responsibilities, but we also work closely with other Departments on specific issues of mutual interest. However, I recognise the strength of my hon. Friend's views, and am happy to raise his concerns with my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, in view of his responsibilities for water safety.

As I have said, my Department has two particular interests in beach safety. As the Minister responsible for tourism. I am very aware that safe beaches are an important component of a quality tourism product, particularly for families holidaying at the seaside. One of our main tourism policy objectives is to encourage the industry to improve the quality of what it offers the public —for example, through the tourist boards' work in grading accommodation and promoting staff training.

Quality is vital if our domestic tourism sector is to cope with ever-increasing international competition. The Government welcome the efforts that seaside resorts have made to improve the quality of their product and to attract more visitors: for example, some 40 resorts are participating in the English tourist board's seaside resorts initiative, which includes both marketing and development activities.

As part of that initiative, resort authorities are working with the private sector and the tourist boards on three-year action programmes aimed at developing potential and improving quality. Indeed, I know that my hon. Friend's constituency is covered by one of those programmes. I very much hope that initiatives to maintain and improve beach safety will figure in the work that is being done in seaside resorts.

I also have an interest in beach safety, as the Minister with responsibility for sport. The safety aspects of water sports are very much in everyone's minds following the tragic canoe accident at Lyme bay. The Government are deeply concerned about that event, and my Department is in discussion with the Department for Education about its wider safety implications.

We shall all be studying closely the lessons emerging from the various inquiries that are already in train. They comprise the inquiries being conducted by Dorset constabulary and separately by Devon county council, and the coroner's inquest, which will be held in due course. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education has undertaken that, if important questions remain unanswered after these, he will not rule out the possibility of pursuing other forms of inquiry.

A document relevant to our discussions following Lyme bay is the report of the water sports safety review, which we published in April. The review group was asked to report on the effectiveness of existing provision for safety in water sports, and to make recommendations. Its overall conclusion was that sports organisations were addressing safety concerns in a comprehensive and responsible manner. However, it identified the need for further action to enhance the individual competence of casual participants, and recommended that sports governing bodies should adopt a wider role in that regard.

The review group also saw a need for action to improve co-ordination, and to prevent duplication of effort among the many bodies involved with safety issues. Finally, it recommended the development of broad management strategies based on extensive discussion as the most appropriate means of resolving potential water conflicts. The review report contains 10 recommendations; I know that they are now being given considered carefully by the organisations to which they are addressed.

My Department is also involved in a number of other issues designed to promote and enhance water sports safety. In April 1992, the Select Committee on the Environment published a report on coastal zone protection and planning. In responding, the Government promised a discussion paper on coastal management, which is intended to address the scope for further regulation of sport and recreation activities along the coast. My Department has been involved in the preparation of this document which the Department of the Environment hopes to publish shortly.

My Department also works closely with the Department of Transport which has an important role in relation to marine safety. Following the publication of the inquiry into river safety by Mr. John Hayes, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport announced the setting up of district marine safety committees to review for each area the way in which responsibilities for safety, rescue and accident prevent are currently distributed, and to consider the need for improvements.

He also announced the setting up of a national marine safety steering committee to ensure national co-ordination and consistency of approach. My Department is represented on this national committee, and the Sports Council is currently considering how it can best become involved in the work of the various district committees.

The final Government initiative of relevance to beach and water safety that I should like to touch on is the decision of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education to include swimming and water sports safety in

the provisions of national curriculum physical education. The main requirements are that children should be able to swim at least 25 m and demonstrate an understanding of water safety by the age of 11. These provisions will become compulsory in August 1994, and I welcome them as a positive contribution towards water safety.

I fully accept what my hon. Friend says about the need for co-ordination. I have outlined some of the areas where we are working closely with other Government Departments. I also recognise the need for closer working relationships nearer to home. My Department works through its sponsored bodies, which, in turn work with a large number of organisations from both public and private sectors. I will be chairing a national seminar on 28 June which will examine the areas where greater co-ordination and co-operation would be of most benefit. This will provide the springboard for a series of regional conferences which I hope will produce positive outcomes in a wide range of areas.

I conclude by thanking my hon. Friend for raising this very important subject tonight.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 10 June 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*

WOODGRANGE PARK CEMETERY BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 17 June.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 4) BILL *(By Order)*
Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [8 February], That the Bill be now read a Second time.
Debate to be resumed on Thursday 17 June.

CROYDON TRAMLINK BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITIES BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 17 June.

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Integrated Administration and Control System

1. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a further statement on the working of the IACS scheme.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mrs. Gillian Shephard): Some 157,000 applications were received in the United Kingdom by the 15 May deadline. The applications are now being checked to determine eligibility for aid.

Mr. Hunter: I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend to her new responsibilities. My question related overtly and covertly to the crushing burden of bureacracy which is gradually suffocating and strangling United Kingdom agriculture. During what I hope will be a long, happy and successful term for my right hon. Friend as Minister, will she make it a priority to deal with that dire problem?

Mrs. Shephard: I assure my hon. Friend that I will certainly make dealing with that burden a priority during my time at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, however long or short that may be. I am aware that the completion of the integrated administration and control system forms has been a burden for farmers, although they are aware that completing the forms will bring them £1 billion of aid this year. We have received congratulations from the National Farmers Union on behalf of farmers for the help and advice that have been administered through our regional offices.

Mr. John D. Taylor: I also welcome the Minister to her new position in the Government. Does she agree that there has been a good response from the farmers in the United Kingdom? Can she give us an idea of what the response has been elsewhere in the European Community? Is it on a par with the response in the United Kingdom?

Mrs. Shephard: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his kind welcome. I agree that there has been a good and responsible response from our farmers. I am not yet in a position to say exactly how the farmers in the rest of the EC have responded. I shall be able to do so after Monday, when I shall be attending my first Agriculture Council, at which I shall be able to take soundings.

Mr. Lord: I also welcome my right hon. Friend to her position. There will be no shortage of support from the Conservative Benches for her in her battles against any Euro-nonsense. In the kindest possible way, may I put her on notice that those of us who represent agricultural constituencies will, in time, want clear evidence that farmers in the other 11 countries have had to cope with their problems in the same way as ours have had to do?

Mrs. Shephard: After thanking my hon. Friend for his welcome, perhaps I may reassure him that one of the first things that I did was to look at the forms that other member states are asking their farmers to complete. They make interesting reading—the German form is thorough and the French form is fearsome; there are appropriate comparisons across the Community. What matters is the way in which the forms are completed and enforcement is carried out.

Mr. Martyn Jones: I also welcome the Minister to her new brief. What percentage of those forms have contained mistakes? Will her Department be as flexible as possible in dealing with any errors that become obvious to the civil servants?

Mrs. Shephard: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his welcome. It is too early to say how many incomplete or erroneous forms we have received. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that we do not want to penalise simple mistakes. Farmers must correct their errors before we spot them, but we shall be as flexible as possible.

Cow and Ewe Premiums

2. **Mr. Bates:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the implementation of beef suckler cow and ewe premium quotas.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jack): Most allocations of quota to sheep producers have now been made. Allocations of suckler cow premium quota will begin in the autumn.

Mr. Bates: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer and I take this opportunity to welcome him warmly to his new post. Together with our right hon. Friend, he makes a formidable team, with the formidable task of defending the interests of the British farmer—a task for which they are more than well qualified.

Is my hon. Friend aware of the concerns expressed by landowners about the implementation of the beef suckler and ewe premium quotas? Is he further aware that the European Council of Ministers recently suggested that it was up to member states to produce measures to protect the legitimate interests of both landowners and tenants? What measures does he propose in this context?

Mr. Jack: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind words of welcome. I will certainly take up his challenge to fight for British farmers and growers and their interests. Those interests, in respect of quota payments, are well served by the fact that they are valued at £495 million. I am aware of the concerns of landowners about this measure. My Ministry has received a legal submission from the Country Landowners Association on the matter. We are studying it carefully; but I trust that my hon. Friend will balance his view against the fact that expenses are involved in the line that he is pushing.

Sir Jerry Wiggin: I welcome my hon. Friend to his new post and I tell him, on behalf of the Agriculture Select Committee, that we look forward to having him before us in due course.

We welcome the transferability of the sale and lease of these subsidies, but will my hon. Friend also examine the underlying philosophy behind them, recognising that they have a regional element, so there must be some way of attaching them at least to areas, if not directly to the land in question? The interests of landowners, both landlords and farmers, must be taken into account.

Mr. Jack: I thank my hon. Friend for his first, searching question on the subject. Perhaps it is worth bearing in mind that one of the concerns of landowners is that when those with quota move off, that will affect the economic value of the land—but we have tried to take that into account in the construction of the national reserve, for which those without quota can apply when taking over land.

Food Advisory Committee

3. **Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received as to the activities of the Food Advisory Committee.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Nicholas Soames): The Food Advisory Committee provides an invaluable public service in reviewing and providing expert advice to Ministers on a wide range of complex issues falling within its remit on the chemical safety of food as well as food composition and labelling. I have received no representations about the work of the committee.

Mrs. Jackson: What are the criteria by which the new team in the Ministry will select people to serve on the Food Advisory Committee? What steps will they take to ensure that the members are independent and free from the commercial interests of the food producers association?

Mr. Soames: The hon. Lady should be aware that the Government are firmly committed to ensuring that food safety regulations are securely based on the best available scientific and technical advice. To that end, we consult and use a great number of the most distinguished expert committees, established by people with a wide range of interests in the food industry. Those interests are all declared—rightly so—in the annual reports. Equally, the hon. Lady will be aware that we rely on their expertise to give us independent advice on how to proceed.

Mr. Jenkin: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is important that the Food Advisory Committee should be open to all so that we can see its workings and so that those workings are open and available to the public, as a matter of public record?

Mr. Soames: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who raises an extremely important point. The Food Advisory Committee publishes its agenda some time before it meets, and afterwards publishes its deliberations. I am happy to assure my hon. Friend that we will do all that we can further to increase its openness. We intend to make sure that everything is available for the general public and consumers to see, to their advantage.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is it not true that 10 of the 17 members of the Government's so-called independent Food Advisory Committee are shareholders in, consultants to or employed by major food companies? Is it not also true that a number of those same companies are major contributors to the Conservative party? Has the Minister seen the grovelling leaflet produced by a member of this so-called independent advisory committee who works for the Dunn Nutrition Centre? It states:

"Important notice. At this moment in our Fund Raising Programme"—

Madam Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will recall that quotations at Question Time are not in order.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The quote says that it is clearly important not to antagonise any part of the food industry unnecessarily. Is that the voice of independence to which the Government are required to listen?

Mr. Soames: The hon. Gentleman's truly fatuous paranoia in these matters amuses and dogs the life of anyone who has anything to do with him. It is important that these independent committees, which are established to provide the Government and Ministers with fully independent, arms-length advice, are experts in the field in which they work. Naturally, some of them work in the food industry. The hon. Gentleman must grow up.

Liquid Milk

4. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the United Kingdom percentage self-sufficiency in liquid milk.

Mr. Jack: The United Kingdom produces sufficient milk to meet its needs for liquid consumption, but not enough to meet the overall demand for dairy products.

Mr. Winterton: I say to Labour Members that this is indeed the voice of independence. Is my hon. Friend aware that I come from the county of Cheshire, which boasts some of the finest dairy farmers in the United Kingdom, perhaps in the whole of the European Community, and has some of the United Kingdom's finest grassland? Is he aware that we are no longer producing as much liquid milk as this country needs, but that, for whatever purpose, we

are importing more? Can that be good in the light of a substantial and growing balance of trade deficit? What does he propose to do to allow our farmers, who have the ability to do it, to produce more of the milk that this country requires?

Mr. Jack: I thank my hon. Friend for his comments. Dairy producers in my constituency in Lancashire will have listened with interest to his description. They will, however, share common cause with us in their endorsement of the measures in the Agriculture Bill which addresses some of the problems that my hon. Friend underlines. In terms of the balance of payments, the Bill will enable milk to be used for the production of certain British cheeses and dairy products, which will replace those that are currently being imported. Farmers will be well pleased with such proposals.

Mr. Skinner: Does the Minister recall that about two years ago as a result of dioxin-contaminated milk in the Bolsover area, action had to be taken with Coalite, the company concerned, and an incinerator put out of use? Is he aware that since the new safety levels have been introduced, the Government have decided to allow Coalite at Bolsover to put that incinerator back into use, with the result that, once again, the Government are prepared to endanger food in that area? Will he take steps to ensure that that incinerator is not put into operation?

Mr. Jack: Incinerators are not directly in my area of responsibility. One of the sadder aspects of the hon. Gentleman's attempt to raise the matter in the way that he has is that he has not taken the opportunity to put on record the fact that we have one of the finest milk supplies with the highest purity levels in the European Community.

Rural Unemployment

5. **Mr. Legg:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures are being taken to reduce unemployment in the rural economy.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: In the negotiations that resulted in the reform of the common agricultural policy, the United Kingdom was successful in ensuring that the CAP continues to benefit all United Kingdom farmers. That success will help to maintain rural employment.

Mr. Legg: May I also welcome my right hon. Friend to her new post and hope that her period of office in her new Department is as successful as it has been in other Departments? As unemployment in agriculture is still at about 10 per cent., will my right hon. Friend consider other ways of reducing it, including the production of a consultative paper to consider the abolition of the Agriculture Wages Board which still sets minimum wages?

Mrs. Shephard: As my hon. Friend knows, the Agriculture Wages Board network is reviewed every five years. It was last reviewed in 1988, so another review is now due. There is to be a fundamental review process with full consultation, and that will be prepared in co-operation with the Department of Employment.

Mr. Salmond: May I say how disappointing it is that the new Minister chose to answer the question solely with reference to agricultural unemployment? Does she not understand that there is enormous concern in the fishing communities about the possibility of rural unemployment arising directly from the days-at-sea legislation passed by her predecessor? Does she acknowledge that concern as represented in the blockades and demonstrations in the past few weeks? As a new Minister without, we hope, the prejudices of her predecessor, will she re-examine that days-at-sea legislation to see whether changes can be made?

Mrs. Shephard: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman, along with the fishing industry, understands that the fundamental need is to rebuild fish stocks. That is universally accepted, but, of course, I am fully aware that there is a lot of controversy about how it should be done. I do not know whether we can avoid unpopular decisions, but I have already met representatives of the fishing industry, and my hon. Friend the Minister of State is engaged in ongoing discussions with them. We are closely in touch, discussing all the background papers and seeing what might be done, but the parameters remain the same.

Mr. Cash: I hope that my right hon. Friend has a successful period of office in her new job. Will she bear in mind the fact that one of the reasons for increased unemployment in the rural areas is that British farmers have to set aside 19 per cent. of our land, whereas the Germans set aside only 12 per cent? The Greeks and the Italians have just been given an increased national quota without its being referred down to farm level, whereas the United Kingdom has a much tougher regime. Will my right hon. Friend do everything possible to ensure that the British farmer gets a fair deal in the European Community and that we have as level a playing field as possible in agriculture? Surely that will significantly reduce levels of unemployment.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Just answer yes.

Mrs. Shephard: I am being given a lot of advice today. I am tempted just to say yes to my hon. Friend, because there is nothing exceptionable in what he says. However, when he talks about a level playing field, he should note that the British Government have also managed to insert into set aside a number of environmental schemes that can help stimulate rural employment.

Slaughterhouses

6. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to improve welfare at slaughterhouses.

Mr. Soames: The legislation has recently been extensively updated and codes of practices introduced. The Department now plans to consult interested parties on proposals for the training of red meat slaughtermen and slaughterhouse operators' responsibility for welfare. An EC proposal on the welfare of animals for slaughter is at present under discussion.

Mr. Marshall: As the Minister is the old hand of the agriculture team, I might have expected a better response to my question. The Minister is aware that there is concern that the present voluntary codes of conduct do not adequately protect the welfare of animals before slaughter. In the light of that concern, is he prepared to think again about the necessity of legislation to impose minimum stunning currents or introduce European directives that would operate throughout the Community?

Mr. Skinner: Give Alan Clark the job.

Mr. Soames: It is a bit late for that—and I am not keeping a diary.

The hon. Gentleman raised an important point and he knows something about this business. The Government have chosen, rightly, to have a code of practice which is applicable to all the slaughterhouses in Britain. The standard of the handling and the welfare of animals in slaughterhouses is a matter of real concern to us. By and large, they are properly and decently handled. The hon. Gentleman should be aware that the strength of stunning currents should not be prescriptive as there are too many variables. It is better handled by codes of practice, but I can assure him that my right hon. Friend and I are dedicated to ensuring that the welfare of animals at slaughter is kept very much at the top of the agenda.

Sir Donald Thompson: May I congratulate my hon. Friend on keeping his job?

Mr. Lord: There speaks the butcher.

Sir Donald Thompson: I thought that he was sitting next to my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord).

Does my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary agree that the codes of practice for the welfare of animals adopted by British farmers are not only models for the whole of Europe, but are copied by the rest of the world?

Mr. Soames: My hon. Friend is, as usual, perfectly right. The standards that we seek to achieve throughout the European Community are those that we have here. Our negotiating stance is entirely to that end. We are pleased that the new presidency document, which is currently being negotiated, is much nearer that point of view than it was previously and I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing that point to the attention of the House.

Mr. Tyler: May we on the Liberal Democrats' Bench welcome the two recruits to the ministerial team? We are also delighted to see the Parliamentary Secretary still in his place. We are delighted to see new faces in the team not least because we hope that they will review and reverse some of the disastrous policies of the previous team, especially in relation to welfare. We hope that the team —[HON. MEMBERS: "What has this got to do with the question?"] Will the Minister give an assurance that when he and his colleagues go to the first Council of Ministers on Monday, they will ensure that the levelling of the playing field is a levelling-up of welfare standards rather than a levelling-down to the standards in other parts of the European Community?

Mr. Soames: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his remarks. He knows perfectly well that the standards in Britain are those that we wish to see exported abroad for the reasons that he states—to have a proper level playing field. There are standards of slaughter in European countries that we wish never to see here. We intend to fight for those proposals and I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend will be successful in so doing.

Mr. Harris: Does my hon. Friend agree that the welfare of animals will not be served if a lot of small slaughterhouses disappear completely because of the charges for veterinary surgeons and other practices on which, unfortunately, the Government are making them devote a lot of expenditure? Would he be prepared to meet representatives from the new organisation that has been formed to represent small slaughterhouse operators, especially in the south-west? Would he receive a delegation if I brought one along?

Mr. Soames: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his helpful question. We are always prepared to consider receiving delegations. It is perfectly true that the welfare of animals is important during their transport, especially for animals that are injured. It is right that there should be a proper network of rural slaughterhouses throughout the United Kingdom. With great respect to my hon. Friend, I do not think that the picture is quite as black as he paints it. I am certainly happy to discuss the matter with him at any time.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: How can the Minister assure the House that slaughtering codes of practice are being complied with when, on 2 November 1992, on 11 November 1992 and on 11 January this year, Parliament was told, "Information is not available" on compliance with codes of practice? That was an answer given by the Minister himself. Is not it true that although the code of practice requires the use of a minimum of 105 milliamps for poultry stunning, some slaughterers may use only between 70 milliamps and 90 milliamps? Why do not the Government legislate and put all our minds at rest?

Mr. Soames: The hon. Gentleman is asking a question to which he perfectly well knows the answer. *[Interruption.]* Exactly. We will study very carefully the Compassion in World Farming report on poultry stunning. We will discuss the report and its implications for the industry before we issue a response. On enforcement, as we have told the hon. Gentleman, and as all my hon. Friends and many Opposition Members who know about the matter accept, animal welfare standards in slaughterhouses are, by and large, of an extremely high standard in this country. The law is enforced by local authorities at district level and Ministry officials investigate, monitor and enforce any allegations of malpractice.

The hon. Gentleman should also be aware that it is not only for humanitarian reasons that slaughterhouse practice should be right. It is also very much in the self-interest of the slaughtermen, because the meat butchered afterwards is always far better if the animal has been properly and carefully handled. We are mindful of the extremely important requirements, and the hon. Gentleman should not try to play politics with an important matter.

Deregulation

7. **Mr. Sykes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress her Department is making in relation to deregulation.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: My predecessor invited comments on a list of Ministry regulations in the early part of last year. We are reviewing every one of the regulations for which we are responsible.

Mr. Sykes: I join my colleagues in welcoming my right hon. Friend to her important position. Despite the disgraceful and callous comments made yesterday by the

right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). I am sure that my right hon. Friend and, indeed, the whole House will want to express support for the owners of and workers in the hotel that collapsed, whose livelihoods have been put in jeopardy. Will she ensure that red tape does not get in the way of any help that she might give to soften the blow of that catastrophe?

Mrs. Shephard: I can certainly give my hon. Friend that assurance, in so far as that very tragic matter falls within the purview of my Ministry. I do not think that anyone would want to heap any more difficulty on what is already a tragic situation.

Mr. Cryer: Is not it true that the Government, who claim to want to deregulate and to take the burden of regulations off people's backs, are actually producing more regulations than ever in the history of Parliament, in the form of statutory instruments? That was certainly true for 1992, and in the current year statutory instruments are being processed through the legislative sausage machine at an even greater rate. When will the right hon. Lady reduce the output of statutory instruments and, in so doing, cease to bypass Parliament? Her Department and others are using delegated powers to bypass this place.

Mrs. Shephard: Coming from a member of a party that has wedded itself to placing burdens on business, the hon. Gentleman's comments are fairly rich. However, I wish to reassure him. I can confirm that the deregulation plans prepared by my Ministry for food law, pesticides, veterinary medicines, animal health and welfare, horticulture and plant protection, fisheries and the common agricultural policy, among other matters, are being placed in the Library as they are prepared. The hon. Gentleman may care to inform himself therefrom.

Mr. Peter Atkinson: I welcome my right hon. Friend's early commitment to deregulation. However, will she turn her attention to the Veterinary Medicines Directorate and its rules and regulations covering the licensing of new and existing products? They are now so complex that each product costs about £100,000 to license, which has resulted in some well-regarded products disappearing from the market.

Mrs. Shephard: I can reassure my hon. Friend on that point. As I said to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), the deregulation plan for veterinary medicines is being prepared and will be placed in the Library. I place the highest importance on that work in the Ministry.

Dr. Strang: I congratulate the right hon. Lady on her appointment. I know that she has a long-standing and genuine interest in agriculture. I hope that she will find her period of office both worth while and enjoyable—after yesterday's events, the period may be shorter than she expected.

Is the right hon. Lady aware that fishing is the most regulated industry and that the purpose of the regulations is the conservation of stocks—an objective which the Opposition support? However, does she understand that fish conservation measures work only with the co-operation of fishermen? Will she abandon the compulsory tie-up regulations, which do not apply to foreign vessels in British waters, will put many British fishermen into bankruptcy and will threaten lives because of the pressure on fishermen to remain at sea in dangerous weather? Will she bring a fresh mind to that problem and review the whole of the current policy?

Mrs. Shephard: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind welcome, which was, perhaps, a little spoilt towards the end. I remind him that, as I said in answer to a previous question, we all agree that there is a fundamental need to rebuild fish stocks, to which the hon. Gentleman committed himself. He must understand that there are parameters within which we have to work. However, I repeat that I have taken an early opportunity to meet the fishermen to hear their practical concerns. As the parameters are so important, I am not sure how far we can move, but the hon. Gentleman can be certain that I shall listen to the fishermen and, as far as possible, work with them.

Whales

8. **Mr. Robathan:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many whales were killed for scientific purposes in 1992.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: A total of 425 minke whales were taken during the 1992-93 season, 330 by Japan and 95 by Norway under their scientific programmes.

Mr. Robathan: Like others, I welcome my right hon. Friend to the Dispatch Box. Will she reassure the House, many of my constituents and others throughout the country that she will continue the admirable and firm policy of her predecessor against the resumption of whaling? Furthermore, will she keep up pressure against countries such as Norway, that wish to resume commercial whaling on a large scale?

Mrs. Shephard: It remains our policy that we should not begin to consider lifting the moratorium unless stocks are proved to be at a healthy level, until whaling methods are humane and until effective procedures for managing stocks, including thorough enforcement procedures, are in place. I shall be in early contact with Mrs. Brundtland.

Mr. Tony Banks: I point out to the new Minister that in no circumstances is there such a thing as the humane killing of a whale, and the Government must push that hard at the International Whaling Commission. Will the right hon. Lady also make it clear to the Norwegian Government that if they persist in flouting the IWC's view and world opinion by hunting whales, Norway will not be allowed to join the EC, it will stand outside the ranks of civilised nations and we shall take action against its imports into this country? Nothing less than that is required now so that the Norwegian barbarians understand how strongly we feel.

Mrs. Shephard: It is, of course, the case that Norwegian whaling would not be compatible with existing EC regulations on whaling and I will certainly lose no opportunity to make that clear.

Sir Roger Moate: Will my right hon. Friend make it clear that enlargement of the Community through Norwegian membership remains an overriding principle and objective of the British Government and that there is no reason why the disagreement over whaling should be an

impediment to membership any more than bull-fighting in Spain should prevent the Spaniards from being members of the EC?

Mrs. Shephard: My hon. Friend is right to make the point, but when new members join clubs, they of course have an eye to the existing rules.

Agricultural Practices

9. **Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals she has to increase the amount of financial support for agricultural practices that protect and enhance the quality of the natural environment.

Mr. Jack: We have just held consultations on proposals for extending the range of environmental management schemes available to farmers. These would involve increasing expenditure on the measures concerned sixfold to £95 million per annum in 1995-96. That covers the whole of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dafis: I welcome the increase in payments. However, agri-environment measures provide a mechanism for a number of advantageous results, such as the maintenance of satisfactory agricultural incomes, important environmental gains and a better market balance. Should not the measure be at the heart, rather than at the margins, of agricultural support? Will the Minister ensure that, in future, agri-environment measures will be the centrepiece of the common agricultural policy, rather than the bolt-on element of agricultural support?

Mr. Jack: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman studies matters carefully and will be aware of our strong support for the EC's agri-environment regulation. He will further be aware that we have just concluded a large-scale consultation exercise, which included a special series of programmes for Wales and the extension of environmentally sensitive areas in Wales. All that was available for comment and I am only sorry that his party did not submit a view on it. If the hon. Gentleman studies the document, he will see our commitment to expanding environmental protection in the field.

Mr. Paice: Is not one of the major moves towards protecting the environment the development of long-term non-rotational set-aside? That policy was initiated by the Government in this country and is now being implemented throughout Europe. My hon. Friend will be aware of the consultation papers issued by his Department some months ago. Many farmers in this country are looking forward with urgent anticipation to the final details of the rules for the non-rotational set-aside scheme.

Mr. Jack: I thank my hon. Friend for drawing the attention of the House to that point. I wish to put on record my appreciation for the efforts of our predecessors in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in making those pioneer moves. We are working hard to conclude the consultation exercise to which I referred. The rules for long-term non-rotational set-aside—particularly the habitats directive—are included in that. We hope to submit out final plans to the Commission in the summer; that will bring us a stage nearer to the answer that my hon. Friend wants.

Food Labelling

10. **Ms Corston:** to ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations she has had regarding the labelling of food.

Mr. Soames: Representations have recently been sought and received on a variety of proposals to improve food labelling law or guidelines. We take very seriously the need for food to be properly labelled.

Ms Corston: Will the Minister admit that there is a big hole in the food labelling programme, particularly in animal welfare labelling? Does the Minister agree that shoppers should be able to see at a glance how the products being offered have been produced? Is not it ridiculous, for instance, that although there are regulations that lay down ways in which farm-fresh and new-laid eggs may be described as "barn eggs" and "fresh eggs", battery eggs can be described as "country fresh" and "farm-fresh"? Why is it that battery eggs can be so misleadingly described? Surely we should be protecting the highest standards and not defending the lowest. Will the Minister strike a blow for consumer choice by introducing that accurate scheme?

Mr. Soames: Our policy is to require comprehensive food labelling so that consumers can make informed choices about the foods they purchase, but we cannot force them to read the labels. The point raised by the hon. Lady about welfare labelling has been raised before. There is already so much information on labels that it is difficult to know how more can be included—for example, what is it, who made it, what does it contain, how long can it be kept, how is it kept and used and where is it from? I take the hon. Lady's point and will have another look at that proposal, but I do not think that it is a runner.

Foodstuffs (Wax Coatings)

11. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consultations she has had on possible harmful effects of the ingestion of wax coatings on foodstuffs.

Mr. Soames: I am currently awaiting advice on those substances from two independent expert committees that are reviewing the results of recent research. Full consultation will follow on any action revealed to be necessary.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is rather odd that this country is considering banning the wax packaging of foodstuffs when there is no evidence whatever that any harm comes from its ingestion? In that respect, we are out of step with the World Health Organisation, the American Food and Drug Administration and our EC partners. Will my hon. Friend give an assurance that the Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment will come to a rapid decision so that the uncertainty of the past four years can be brought to an end?

Mr. Soames: We always come to rapid decisions. We have had extensive consultations on this matter and it has been exposed to us that a number of the previous plans are inappropriate. Important uses have been replaced and it is clear that others—for example, in veterinary medicines

and pesticides—might bring benefits that outweigh any slight risks involved. Moreover, further safety data have recently been submitted to us. For all those reasons, I agree that it was prudent for us to defer action pending clarification of the situation. I assure my hon. Friend that as soon as we have the necessary information we will press ahead with great speed.

Set-aside

12. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total acreage of arable land put into set-aside during the last three years.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: A total of 54,317 hectares, or 134,000 acres, of land have been entered into the five-year scheme and 14,118 hectares, or 35,000 acres, have been entered into the one-year scheme in the United Kingdom during the years 1990 to 1992. I will publish as soon as possible details of the amount of land set aside under the arable area payment scheme.

Mr. Hardy: Is it not now clear that the set-aside agreement, which the Government wish the nation to see as a triumph, means that in the United Kingdom 2 per cent. more arable land will be set aside than in any other member state? Will the Minister confirm that the cost of that agreement is likely to exceed £1·5 billion? What steps is she taking to remedy the failures of her predecessor?

Mrs. Shephard: I am surprised at the hon. Gentleman's point. He must have noticed that, because of the efforts of my predecessors, set-aside in this country contains a substantial number of features that care for the countryside and the environment. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman would apparently support the increasing of surpluses. After all, it was the problem of the deletion of wasteful surpluses that set-aside was brought in to solve.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 10 June.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Leighton: Is the Prime Minister aware that those of us with his best interests at heart fear that he has made a major blunder by sacking the previous Chancellor who had taken all the flack on the exchange rate mechanism and the collapse of the economy? Now that the Government begin to resemble the hotel that collapsed and crumbled down the cliff face, bookmakers are offering odds against the Prime Minister leading his party into the next election—[HON. MEMBERS: "Shame."] Now that the right hon. Gentleman has not a friend but a rival in No. 11, is he beginning to feel a little exposed and beleaguered?

The Prime Minister: I must say that I had not thought of the hon. Gentleman as the hon. Member most solicitous for my future. I am grateful to him for what he said about that. The owners of the hotel have my deepest sympathy.

Q2. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 10 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Brazier: In view of the latest IRA outrage, will my right hon. Friend consider modifying the right to silence and the law on disclosure of sources so that known bombers can be brought to justice? Will my right hon. Friend join me in expressing sadness at the fact that on Tuesday, when a very important Government measure to combat terrorism came before the House, the Labour party voted against it.

Mr. Enright: I was proud to do so.

The Prime Minister: I share my hon. Friend's regret at that. I am sorry to hear the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) say that he is proud to have voted against it. The Labour party had the chance to demonstrate that it is resolute against terrorism and it did not take it. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland said, all the options open to a civilised state need to be available for use against terrorism.

Mr. John Smith: Is the Prime Minister not ashamed that his ex-Chancellor felt compelled to say yesterday that the way in which he conducts his Administration is so harmful to the national interest that it does not deserve to succeed?

The Prime Minister: That is an unexpectedly selective quotation from the right hon. and learned Gentleman. It is because we are in office and have followed our policies that we have inflation at 1·3 per cent. and interest rates at 6 per cent. and that our economy is recovering and no other economy in Europe is likely to do as well this year or next year.

Mr. Smith: I am not surprised that the Prime Minister did not choose to answer the question. Does he not understand that the significance of the ex-Chancellor's revelations is that they come from a close political colleague, an ally who sat beside the Prime Minister at the very heart of his Government? Who is better placed than the ex-Chancellor to know the weaknesses of this Administration and the weaknesses of this Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend said what he wished to say yesterday, and I have no intention of adding to what he said yesterday or providing the right hon. and learned Gentleman with an opportunity to extend it. As one of my predecessors might have said, we have a little local difficulty. We shall get over it, and I am going on with the work in hand.

Mr. Smith: Does not the Prime Minister understand that when he announced business as usual this morning he caused apprehension throughout the land? Do not his responses show that he is incapable of learning from anything or anyone? As his authority and that of the Government is now in tatters, will he for once put the national interest first and let the people decide in a general election—*[Interruption.]*.

Madam Speaker: Order. This is a total waste of precious time.

Mr. Smith: Why will the Prime Minister—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must now come to order. Hilarity is one thing, but we have business to do here.

Mr. Smith: Why will the Prime Minister not let the people decide whether they want him and his wretched Government?

The Prime Minister: I have to say to the right hon. and learned Gentleman—he may have overlooked it—that we had an election last year. We won it, and he lost it. I say that he lost it, advisedly. The score is 4:0 in elections recently; in due course, it will be 5:0.

Q3. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 10 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hawkins: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the independent Policy Studies Institute reported this week that two thirds of Britain's workers have increased their skills in the past five years? Is not that, as it rightly said, a training revolution, and will not it further assist Britain's competitiveness in world markets?

The Prime Minister: I did see that report, although I noticed, alas, that it had escaped the Opposition in yesterday's debate. The world is becoming more competitive than ever before, and it is undeniably true that we need constantly to improve the skills of the work force. That is true now, and it will be equally true in the future. It is good to know that so many employees and employers are seeking to do that. The Opposition make a great deal of the importance of skills and training. What I cannot understand in the light of that is why they oppose school testing, which is so vital to it.

Mr. Ashdown: Does the Prime Minister recall listening yesterday to the very interesting speech of the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), who said that it would require a change in policy and the building of a wider consensus if we were to take the very tough decisions on tax and public spending that were necessary to put the country right? Does he realise that there is a crisis not only in the Conservative party but in the nation? If he would put the plight of the nation before his, he would discover that he could probably solve both by taking that advice.

The Prime Minister: I have to say to the right hon. Gentleman, with all kindliness, that he is developing pomposity into an art form. I always listen with very great care to my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), and I heard what he had to say. I have just heard what the right hon. Gentleman had to say about difficult decisions. If he really meant that, why, having previously supported VAT on fuel, did he vote against it in the Budget?

Mr. Ashby: Now that we have had an opportunity to see the 14-year-old test papers—*[Interruption.]* I am referring, of course, to the test papers for 14-year-olds. Now that we have had an opportunity to see them, does my right hon. Friend share my view in wondering what on earth the teachers were on about?

The Prime Minister: Yes. I believe that many people who have studied the test papers will be wondering about that. The English test earlier this week was a straightforward test of reading and writing skills, precisely the sort of test that children enjoy and need and that teachers have traditionally carried out for many years. We need tests such as those regularly to raise standards and help people to do better.

Equally important, not only do we need such tests, but I believe that parents have a right to know what the results of the tests are. I deeply regret that many schools that carried out the tests earlier this week are apparently refusing to release the results to parents and others.

Q5. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 10 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Chisholm: In view of the rising and sickening tide of racist attacks, may I ask the Prime Minister if he will join the Labour party—*[Interruption.]*—in responding positively to the invitation of the Anti-Racist Alliance for a member of the Government to attend next Saturday's major demonstration in Croydon against racist violence? Failing that, will he send a message of support? Will he also implement, as a matter of urgency, the recommendations of the Commission for Racial Equality to strengthen the law on incitement to racial hatred and introduce the specific offences of racial harassment and racial violence?

The Prime Minister: Regarding the hon. Gentleman's inadvertent slip, no, I have no intention of joining the Labour party—*[Interruption.]* I may have my difficulties, but they are not remotely that bad. I deplore racialism as much as the hon. Gentleman does and as much as it is deplored by other hon. Members, but I do not think that demonstrations are necessarily the right way to deal with it. Action and tolerance in society, and the legislation that we have passed, are necessary to deal with the problem.

Q6. **Mr. Raymond S. Robertson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 10 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Robertson: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that British Aerospace has just landed a large contract to supply Hawk aircraft to Indonesia? Following my right hon. Friend's successful negotiation of a huge contract for Tornado aircraft for Saudi Arabia, does he agree that this is excellent news not just for British Aerospace but for the many supply companies in Scotland and throughout the United Kingdom?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I am delighted to confirm that British Aerospace has won a Hawk contract in Indonesia, worth £500 million. Together with the Tornado order in Saudi Arabia in January and Oman's decision to purchase Vickers' Challenger 2 tanks, those exports will bring business securing many thousands of jobs in the British defence industry.

Those orders testify to the excellence of the British defence industry, to the strength of its export performance and to the value of a close partnership between the Government and industry. That partnership produced record defence orders of over £5 billion last year—*[Interruption.]*—and that record has already been exceeded this year, with half the year still to come. I regret

to note that some Opposition Members, who often talk to me about unemployment, seem to oppose those orders won by British exporters.

Q7. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 10 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Loyden: Will the Prime Minister, in the wake of the activities that took place on Merseyside in regard to the western approaches and the Battle of the Atlantic, acknowledge the fact that it is time to repay the debt that we owe to the Merchant Navy, which lost 30,000-plus seamen during the war years? Will he take action to reactivate our shipyards so that the nation may once again fund the sort of merchant fleet that should be the priority of a maritime nation, and put the seamen back to work?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the opportunity to congratulate Liverpool on the remarkable way in which it arranged and organised the celebrations concerning the Battle of the Atlantic. I was privileged to be there for a day and the whole thing was handled magnificently.

I should be delighted to see a stronger and more successful Merchant Navy, but that depends on the capacity of the British Merchant Navy to obtain the orders that are there throughout the world.

Mr. Gill: Does my right hon. Friend accept that, if we are to be successful in the battle against regulatory overkill, it will be necessary for all Ministers to be ruthless and arbitrary in the prosecution of that battle?

The Prime Minister: It is not the first occasion in recent weeks that I have been invited to be ruthless and arbitrary.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): Will the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): Yes, Madam. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 14 JUNE—Consideration of Lords amendments to the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Bill.

Proceedings on the Representation of the People Bill.

TUESDAY 15 JUNE—Consideration of Lords amendments to the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill.

Ways and Means resolution relating to the Finance (No. 2) Bill.

WEDNESDAY 16 JUNE—Completion of consideration of Lords amendments to the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill.

Motion to amend schedule 1 to the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975.

THURSDAY 17 JUNE AND MONDAY 21 JUNE—Debate on a Government motion to approve the defence estimates 1992 (Cm. 1981).

FRIDAY 18 JUNE—There will be a debate on the Government's strategy for science, engineering and technology, on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

Mrs. Beckett: I thank the Leader of the House for that report and for his acceptance of our demand for a two-day debate on the trade union legislation so that we can expose the frightening consequences for personal freedom of the last-minute decision by the Government to use this legislation to allow employers, in effect, to fine people for being members of trade unions—a legal right normally threatened only in dictatorships, not in democracies.

I also thank the right hon. Gentleman for arranging the defence White Paper debate, and seek an assurance that this year's White Paper debate will take place on the normal schedule and not two years late, as with the one on which he is reporting today.

I remind the right hon. Gentleman also that we have repeatedly pressed for the Government to keep the House in touch with the situation in Bosnia by means of either statements or a debate in Government time.

Finally, will the Leader of the House arrange for the Prime Minister to make a statement to the House on a most important matter which touches not only the rights and liberties of the House, but our ability to defend the public interest?

The right hon. Gentleman will recall that, on 10 November, my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition pressed the Prime Minister to set up a full inquiry under the Tribunals of Inquiry (Evidence) Act 1921 into what is known as the Matrix Churchill affair; and that when, later that day, the Attorney-General announced the form of the inquiry—an independent departmental inquiry—he made it clear that inquiry in that form would not render the matter sub judice in the House.

This was explored further on 12 November, as reported in *Hansard* at column 988, when the Prime Minister explicitly stated that the form of the inquiry was chosen so that the matter would not be sub judice and so that hon. Members would be open to questions. The right hon. Gentleman confirmed this again in a written answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on 22 February.

Since then, we have had a string of refusals by Ministers to answer questions, in the form of saying that this is a matter for the Scott inquiry—in sharp contrast to the Prime Minister's assurance—but culminating in an answer given on 7 June to a question by my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition in which he asked the Prime Minister about making it a policy of the Government, as he had previously said, to give substantive answers to questions on this matter. The Prime Minister's answer was 'no; Ministers would not give substantive answers to any questions on the matter.

The Leader of the House will appreciate that, in consequence, the Table Office refuses even to accept questions on any of the issues now before the Scott inquiry. He will know that that is clean contrary both to the precedent set by the departmental inquiry into the Bank of Credit and Commerce International and to the assurances that were given repeatedly by the Prime Minister.

The decision keeps the matters not only away from questioning and debate on the Floor of the House but out of the domain of public knowledge because hon. Members are not permitted to publish questions that the Table Office has refused. It is a most serious matter for the liberties of the House. As the Prime Minister gave the assurances, I ask the Leader of the House to arrange for his right hon. Friend to make a statement to the House on the matter.

Mr. Newton: In view of the importance that the right hon. Lady obviously attaches to the matter, I shall take her last point first. I think that I would carry you with me, Madam Speaker, in saying that the question of what is or is not sub judice is to be determined by you, with advice to you, rather than by me. Equally, the policy of the Table Office towards the acceptance of questions is not a matter for me or for the Prime Minister.

The Government argued when the inquiry was announced, and it is still my understanding, that the form of inquiry did not render the matters formally sub judice. However, other Ministers and I have made it clear that we do not think it appropriate to respond to questions of the kind that the right hon. Lady has apparently in mind at a time when the Scott inquiry has been asked to conduct a thorough and independent review of all the matters. That is the common sense and propriety of the position. I answered a question along those lines in the course of deputising for the Prime Minister a week or two ago.

I will draw to my right hon. Friend's attention what the right hon. Lady has said. No doubt the matter will be noted by you, Madam Speaker, and by the House authorities.

On the right hon. Lady's other points, I am not sure that I recognised her description of the process that led to a two-day debate on the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill. Nor do I recognise or accept her description of the clause on which she spent most of her time. I acknowledge that, gracefully and with the usual understanding displayed in discussions through the usual channels, the Government felt it right to respond to the

Opposition's request that two days should be allowed for debate on that matter. I am grateful that the right hon. Lady has, in her own way, acknowledged that.

I am grateful also for the right hon. Lady's thanks for the fact that I was able to meet yet another of her many demands, in this case the two-day debate on the defence estimates. I assure her that our aim will be to debate the forthcoming defence estimates for the following year on a more normal timetable, if it is possible. That is our aim and intention.

With reference to Bosnia, I have said several times that the Government are always ready to make a statement if they feel that some development or change in the situation justifies it. In any event, it would seem that, subject to whatever you, Madam Speaker, may say, a two-day debate on the defence estimates will provide some opportunity for hon. Members to advert to those matters next week.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, as the President of Bosnia is planning to be in this country next week, it would be appropriate to have a statement on that country? While I accept entirely his remarks about the defence debate, may we have an early debate on the role of the United Nations in the matter?

Mr. Newton: I simply take note of my hon. Friend's latter point, without perhaps raising his expectations too high that I will be able to find time for a debate in the near future. I note also his reference to the forthcoming presence of the President of Bosnia in this country. Although I understand why he put the point in the way that he did, I do not want it to be thought that the presence of a particular person in this country is a reason for a statement to be made.

Mr. Nigel Jones (Cheltenham): Following last night's indecently short debate on local government capping, will the Leader of the House find time for a full debate on local government? The House could then take stock of the shortcomings of the council tax and review the bizarre ideas of the Local Government Commission. That body is wasting large sums of taxpayers' money at a time when local services are being cut.

Mr. Newton: I note the hon. Gentleman's request. I am sure that he is making representations to Sir John Banham, who has indicated that he is very ready to listen to representations about the work of the commission.

As for last night's debate, my eye falls on the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay), who helped to make the debate even shorter for almost everybody else by speaking at excessive length.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): When will the Government announce their policy on regional aid? There is considerable concern in Bury and Bolton that assisted area status is to be removed. The community that I represent would welcome an early statement to the contrary.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend knows that my right hon. and hon. Friends are working very hard on the review of the assisted areas map. I certainly cannot speculate from the Dispatch Box about the outcome, but I am sure that my right hon. Friends will note the point that my hon. Friend has made and will certainly be concerned to bring these matters to the stage of a decision and announcement as soon as possible.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): May I revert to the point raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) about the refusal of Ministers to answer questions on the Scott inquiry? Surely the Leader of the House will agree with me that if Ministers refuse to answer questions it is not a matter for the Speaker or for the Table Office. They are debarred from doing so by the Minister's own actions, and it is the Ministers who are refusing and putting the block on, not the Table Office or you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Newton: I meant no more than that the policies and practices of the Table Office are not determined by Ministers. It is for Ministers to determine for themselves whether they think it appropriate to answer particular questions in particular circumstances. On that I have made the position clear.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Will my right hon. Friend arrange a special debate about the need for local authorities to exercise better discipline over unruly tenants? It is surely not necessary for a local authority to demolish a whole estate because of lawlessness. Cannot local authorities issue immediate injunctions on unruly tenants?

Mr. Newton: I am not immediately familiar with the precise powers of local authorities in that matter, although what my hon. Friend says seems to make sense. The circumstances in which a local authority might decide to demolish a particular estate, I imagine, would embrace a range of factors, including the extent to which it thought that the basic circumstances, surroundings and nature of the estate contributed to problems which could be better overcome by building new accommodation.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Pursuant to the important questions put by my right hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle), is not the Leader of the House sheltering under your skirts, Madam Speaker? It is not the Speaker's responsibility. "Erskine May" says on page 292:

"Questions are not in order which renew or repeat in substance questions already answered or to which an answer has been refused or which fall within a class of question which a Minister has refused to answer."

The buck is with Ministers and not with Madam Speaker.

Mr. Newton: I can do no more than repeat what I said to the hon. Member for Warrington, North. Ministers do not determine the rules in "Erskine May", or indeed the interpretation and application of them by the Chair or by the Table Office. Ministers determine whether they think it appropriate to answer questions in particular circumstances. I have restated and defended the position of Ministers on that.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): May I ask my right hon. Friend for a debate next week on the provision of suitable shopping facilities with access for pensioners and others in any area so that I may raise the deplorable decision of Sainsburys to close the store at Greenford Broadway that has been there for 61 years? It is causing great concern to the people of the area because they will

[Mr. Harry Greenway]

lose an irreplaceable facility. The matter should be discussed in the House; it is important to a community and it is typical of what is happening in other areas.

Mr. Newton: I and the Government can perhaps be expected to accept responsibility for many matters, but the location and practices of Sainsbury's stores—of which I am fairly frequently a customer, but not in that location—are not among them. I am, however, sure that, knowing the sensitivity of such firms to their customers and to representations on their behalf, the management's attention will undoubtedly be drawn to my hon. Friend's remarks.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): May I refer the Leader of the House to the call made by his right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), and repeated in *The Times* today, for the appointment of a senior Minister, backed up by a unified, nationwide anti-terrorist agency—to which Ulster Unionist Members would add, reinforced by comprehensive United Kingdom-wide legislation—to combat terrorism? May we have an early statement with regard to those matters, because we would strongly support the line that the right hon. Gentleman recommended?

Mr. Newton: Inescapably, a number of different agencies are involved in anti-terrorist operations. The hon. Gentleman will know of the arrangements for the fast and effective sharing of intelligence between those agencies. I have no doubt that my right hon. and learned Friends who are principally concerned—the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Home Secretary—will take note of what my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) and the hon. Gentleman have said, but a very strong case would have to be made before one added yet another agency.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the case in the Hampshire courts involving a girl of eight years of age who a judge thought was partly responsible for the attempted rape of her when an 18-year-old boy baby-sitter was in the house? Is it possible to have a debate—I know that it may be sacrilege to say so—on the curious utterances of some judges in courts? The judge's statement has more or less prejudged the integrity not only of the eight-year-old girl but of the entire family.

Mr. Newton: I rather doubt that it would be appropriate to have a debate on that case and, while I recognise why he felt it right to raise the subject, I am sure that my hon. Friend will understand that the conduct of judges is a matter for my right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor. I would not think it right to comment on a judge's decision and remarks in a particular case.

My hon. Friend will also know, and I am sure will have taken some encouragement from, the fact that papers are, I understand, being prepared for consideration by the Attorney-General on the question of a reference to the Court of Appeal for the sentence to be reviewed. However, that is entirely a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Will it be possible next week, or as early as possible, to have a debate on the way in which the Government go about their business? In view of the criticism and the devastating remarks made yesterday by the former Chancellor, the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), would it not be appropriate to take note of his remarks so that the House may have the earliest opportunity to debate the points that were made? Opposition Members would then have a chance to criticise the way in which the Government conduct their business day in and day out.

Mr. Newton: No doubt the hon. Gentleman could have found an opportunity in the debate yesterday, had he succeeded in catching your eye, or that of one of your Deputies, Madam Speaker. Since the comments of my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont) appear to me to be totally and flatly contradictory to the type of criticisms that the Opposition make of the Government, I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman would get very far.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House knows that Castle Point borough council was capped last night, although it is not a profligate council. I was denied the opportunity to give a full explanation of that decision—an explanation that hon. Members and the people of Castle Point deserve to hear—while Opposition Members spoke about it. Will the Leader of the House find time as soon as possible to give me an opportunity to explain that to the people of Castle Point and to the House?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) may have considered my remarks to have been a little harsh, but I thought that the length of the hon. Gentleman's speech deprived my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) of the opportunity to respond to the criticisms that 'Thurrock' made of 'Castle Point'. I do not know whether I can arrange a full debate for my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point, but if I can find a way to provide an appropriate opportunity for my hon. Friend to make his case, I shall certainly do so.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): Will the Leader of the House arrange for the Secretary of State for Social Security to make a statement, preferably tomorrow, about the way in which the Benefits Agency conducts itself in its consultations with local communities about the transfer of facilities from one office to another? In my constituency a local community in Holyhead was given only 14 days' notice of the transfer. What are local communities to do when they are given such short notice? Will the Secretary of State come to the House to explain the Benefits Agency's actions?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will know of my former experience as Secretary of State for Social Security and that, as this is the first time that I have heard of the matter, I cannot comment on it at the Dispatch Box. I know from my previous experience that it is the policy to mount a proper consultation process with local people about such issues. I shall bring the hon. Gentleman's comments to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Leader of the House provide time to debate the report of the Select Committee on Members' Interests on commercial lobbying, which has now been published for about two years? The Select Committee, which has a Conservative

majority, was concerned about the sleaze and corruption that surrounds Parliament. In view of recent events which show that employees of Asil Nadir have clearly been at the heart of government, is it not time that we had a debate on the issue—or are the Government determined to keep the affair covered up? The excuse of shortage of time is inadequate when two years have now elapsed. That points to the fact that the Government are frightened of sleaze being uncovered.

Mr. Newton: As I have said on a number of occasions, I am seeking an appropriate opportunity for the House to discuss both the report to which the hon. Gentleman referred and the one on which the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) so frequently presses me. However, I am not encouraged when I hear the sort of speech that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) plans for such an opportunity.

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): I have heard what the Leader of the House said this afternoon about assisted area status, but there is great concern in Bolton and Bury about the press speculation on the issue. Although the Leader of the House cannot give a date for a statement, will he give an assurance that the Government's proposals will not be announced during the recess?

Mr. Newton: I expect that my right hon. and hon. Friends will wish to bring the issue to the stage of decision and announcement at a time appropriate for the House. As I am not in a position to make definite statements about timing, I cannot say more than that this afternoon.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton) *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Mr. Harry Barnes—*[Interruption.]* Sorry, Mr. Harry Cohen.

Mr. Cohen: Harry Barnes is a good bloke too.

A recent parliamentary answer revealed that the Government planned to push ahead with their privatisation policies, which include privatisation of the police national computer. That privatisation will have enormous civil liberty implications as criminal records will go into private control. Therefore, will the Leader of the House urge the Government to reconsider the issue? Failing that, may we have a full day's debate on the matter in the House?

Mr. Newton: I do not think that I can promise a full day's debate, but I can promise to bring the issue to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

Mrs. Helen Jackson (Sheffield, Hillsborough): In view of the consultations taking place up and down the country about the charges for water that are to be made next year and thereafter, and in view of the fact that, in Yorkshire, customers are being asked to choose between an increase of between 6 and 11 per cent. over the rate of inflation, is the Leader of the House prepared to suggest that the House should have a full debate on the principle of how we charge for water, how we keep charges down and how customers can get a decent deal from the water industry?

Mr. Newton: I am not in a position to promise the hon. Lady the debate that she wants. She will want to reflect on whether her constituents would want important water quality and treatment of water waste projects to be disadvantaged in the way that might result from the sort of policies that I suspect she has in mind.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement to be made by the appropriate Minister on the question of Lloyd's, the posh gambling den where many of the people from the belly of the establishment, including as many as 47 Tory Members, are up to their necks in debt? Given the precarious nature of the Government's majority, will the right hon. Gentleman guarantee that not a single penny piece of taxpayers' money will be used to bail out those Tory Members? No set-aside schemes!

Mr. Newton: I shall deal with the hon. Gentleman's basic question, asking me to arrange a statement on these matters. The answer is no.

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to the recent report by Amnesty International about acts of terror and abuses of human rights in the occupied territories? May I further draw his attention to remarks made to the Foreign Secretary by a delegation of hon. Members who recently visited the occupied territories? Will he find time next week, if not for a full debate, then for the Secretary of State to come to the House and make a statement on ways in which the Government may be able to bring pressure to bear on the Government of Israel to prevent them from frustrating the peace process?

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise a separate statement, but my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will be here to answer questions on Wednesday next, which may provide the hon. Gentleman with his opportunity.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): Will the Leader of the House look again at early-day motion 1928 and find time next week to debate the issues surrounding illegal Sunday trading—or are the Government determined not to hold a debate so that we cannot expose the financial supporters of their party who are allowed to continue illegal trading and closing down small shops?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman mentioned early-day motion 1928, which concerns Manchester United football club. I think he meant 1929, which relates to the Shops (Amendment) Bill—his Bill.

[That this House notes the recent rulings of the European Court and the House of Lords upholding the Shops Act 1950; now demands that major national retailers set an example by closing their stores on Sundays in observance of the rule of law and in recognition of the sovereignty of Parliament; and urges the Government to support the honourable Member for Ogmore's Shops (Amendment) Bill which received a majority of 173 at Second Reading on 22nd January and which was amended in Committee to make it a compromise solution so that it both meets the reasonable needs of consumers, including DIYs, garden centres as defined by the Horticultural Trades Association and convenience stores up to 3,000 square feet in size, and substantially maintains the special character of Sunday.]

As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Government do not support his Bill. We propose to introduce our own Bill, embracing a range of options. That is the right way to proceed, and that is the way we intend to proceed.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for the Home Secretary to make an urgent statement on the family reunion policy for Bosnian refugees, about which there is growing concern? Is he aware that there are many vulnerable people in Bosnia, including Mrs. Sadeta Draganovic, a widowed mother of three young children who lost her right to come here following the murder of her husband? She is anxious to join her close relatives in this country. There is also a 13-year-old girl in a detention camp in Croatia who cannot come to this country to join her grandparents because she does not fit the Government's eligibility rules.

Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for an urgent inquiry into this policy—and arrange for it to be considerably relaxed?

Mr. Newton: If I know the hon. Gentleman, he will already have made representations direct to my right hon. and learned Friend on these matters. If he has not, I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend will read in *Hansard* what he has said. I shall certainly not attempt to do more than undertake to ensure that the hon. Gentleman's remarks are drawn to his attention.

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): Will the Leader of the House, pursuant to previous answers to questions about the Scott inquiry, confirm that there is no rule of parliamentary procedure that prevents Ministers from answering questions and that a political decision has been reached to break the Prime Minister's promise because to answer the questions may lead to embarrassment for Ministers?

Mr. Newton: I can certainly confirm—and nothing that I said on the numerous occasions on which I have referred to the matter this afternoon conflicts with this—that answers to questions are matters for Ministers to determine. I shall not attempt to go beyond that because there is nothing that I can usefully add to what I said earlier.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): Further to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mrs. Jackson), may I ask the Leader of the House whether he read the all-party Whip drawing attention to the problem of drinking water in the House? The notice said that, unless the taps were marked "Drinking water", it was dangerous to consume water in the House. Could he make a statement about what obnoxious materials come out of the taps in the Commons and about what behaviour of hon. Members we should be on the alert for so as to show tolerance for their behaviour and to advise them that they should not drink any more of the stuff in case there are deleterious consequences for their health?

Mr. Newton: I have been advised by my right hon. Friend the Chief Whip to make some reference to W. C. Fields. I do not immediately recall the quotation, but I suspect that it has something to do with the advantages of drinking other than water most of the time. I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman's remarks have been heard by the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee, the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell), who is sitting almost immediately behind the hon. Gentleman. If the hon. Member for Ogmore cares to devote some attention to that, he may find it a welcome diversion from the problems of his Shops (Amendment) Bill.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Will the Leader of the House ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to reply to me about my constituency receiving training credits and the statement that I had the cheek to condemn the Government? When I checked with the Renfrewshire enterprise trust——

Madam Speaker: Order. May I help the hon. Gentleman? Is he requesting a debate next week about a matter concerning his constituency? If he is, perhaps he will let us know quickly and precisely what the matter is all about?

Mr. Graham: I was about to request a statement about a misleading statement to me that my constituency benefits from training credits. When I checked with the company that gives out training credits, I was told that there was none in my constituency. There were six in Dunbartonshire, which is across the river, and there were some in Grampian. Therefore, a misleading statement was made in the House and I should like a Minister to make a statement about that.

Mr. Newton: In view of your generous offer, Madam Speaker, to help the hon. Gentleman, may I suggest that the best way for him to seek to enlist your help would be to apply for an Adjournment debate?

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Is the Leader of the House aware that at this moment a peaceful 24-hour occupation of County hall is taking place in protest at County hall being left empty, at proposals to turn it into a hotel and about the fact that London still desperately needs a strategic authority? May we please have a debate on London? The Leader of the House promised us one in the past, but we are still waiting for it.

Mr. Newton: My recollection is that there was a substantial opportunity for a debate on London during, I think, the last Consolidated Fund Bill debate. I would need to check that, but there was certainly an opportunity not long ago. I am delighted to hear that the occupation of County hall, deplorable as that may be, is peaceful. That is in striking contrast to what went on there when it was occupied.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): As the President of the Board of Trade has been surprisingly shy and timid in failing to come before the House to make a statement this week, will the Leader of the House find time for an early debate on the impact of last week's pit closures on the lives, pension rights and home security of the miners concerned and the impact on the economy of the areas affected?

The Leader of the House will understand that areas such as my constituency of Stoke-on-Trent will lose millions of pounds in wages and economic activity as a result of the closures. We need to know from the Government what form, speed and size of economic assistance will be made, and whether the Government back British Coal's vindictive attitude in calling the redundancies voluntary when they are compulsory. As the Leader of the House now understands, those miners will lose mortgage insurance rights. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman is repeating at some length the point he made yesterday. I understand that, in view of his constituency interest. I am sure it was noted by my right hon. Friend, and equally I am sure that what he has said today will be noted.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Later. I shall take points of order after the personal statement.

Personal Statement

4.5 pm

Mr. Archie Hamilton (Epsom and Ewell): With permission, Madam Speaker, I would like to make a short statement about my leaving the Government.

I asked the Prime Minister in January to be allowed to leave his Government at the next time he made changes, and I intended to publish a letter to my right hon. Friend which I was hoping would be in the public domain this week. However, as a result of the unexpected timing of the reshuffle, I now run the risk that some may think I did not go voluntarily but was sacked.

I consider myself to be extremely fortunate since I joined the Whips Office in 1982 to have served in the Administrations of both my right hon. Friend the noble Lady Thatcher and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

I have perhaps had the unique experience, when Parliamentary Private Secretary to Margaret Thatcher, of being present when a reshuffle was planned and when my promotion to the job of Minister for the Armed Forces was discussed by my right hon. Friend Lady Thatcher, her Chief Whip of the day, Lord Waddington, and her Principal Private Secretary. I offered to leave the room, but was encouraged to stay. After a period of further discussion, responsibility for the armed forces was mine.

When I look back to see what mark I have made in the history books, I am afraid the view is somewhat obscured by the enraged faces of mainly retired Army officers who have seen their corps amalgamated or their regimental bands wound up. Some admirals still blame me for the decision to send Wrens to sea, and I know that a number of my right hon. and hon. Friends consider that I was hell-bent on turning their safe seats into marginals by closing down military establishments in their constituencies.

On a more serious note, it has been a great privilege to have served with the armed forces of this country for the past five years. I witnessed at first hand the courage and humour of our service men about to go into combat during the Gulf war. I have seen the professionalism, dedication and compassion of British soldiers delivering humanitarian aid in Bosnia; and of course I have seen them on patrol in Northern Ireland in very dangerous conditions.

We are deeply privileged in this country to have the finest armed forces in the world, and I know that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned friend the Secretary of State for Defence and his excellent team of Ministers will ensure that they remain so.

For the past few years I had at defence one of the best jobs in the Government—very little legislation, plenty of travel abroad and the special opportunity to work alongside the senior officers of our three armed services. I clearly ran the risk that the longer I stayed in the job, the more likely I was to be moved sideways to another that was less good.

I have been both privileged and lucky, as anyone is, to serve in the Government. My resignation opens up new opportunities and possibilities for me, including the chance to spend more time—*[Interruption]*—with my constituents. I intend to support my Government from the Back Benches during a period when I am sure we will see

[Mr. Archie Hamilton]

the growth of economy that we all so fervently desire and the recognition of all that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is doing to bring it about.

Points of Order

4.9 pm

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I gave you notice earlier today that I wished to raise a point of order before the two occasions on which the right hon. Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton) had a swipe at me. I believe that he is to blame for the sloppy stewardship of the parliamentary timetable. The fact that the hon. Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink)——

Madam Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman has a point of order, it should be addressed to me and to no one else.

Mr. Mackinlay: Last night we debated the Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order 1993. It is my submission that not all the documents that should have been available to hon. Members were available in the House. I refer to page 382 of "Erskine May":

"it has been accepted that a document which has been cited by a Minister ought to be laid upon the Table of the House".

With that in mind, we should have had the appeal documents from the three councils that were appealing against the Government's capping order, but they were not available. Had they been available, hon. Members would have been able to understand and know the reasons why those councils felt that the order was unfair. We have been denied that opportunity and I believe that that breaches the rules of the House.

Even if I am wrong on that matter, if one studies the draft order and reads through the gobbledegook and gibberish, it seems that those documents are inextricably part and parcel of the draft order document and should have been available to hon. Members for that reason. They were not available and therefore the order that we debated and voted on last night is flawed. It is important to our ability to scrutinise these matters that those documents are available. They are not available either in the Vote Office or the Library, and I hope that you, Madam Speaker, will consider that point to be important.

Madam Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Member for giving me notice of his point of order. I have listened carefully to what he has said. I am satisfied that there was no obligation on the Minister to lay before the House the submissions that he had received from the capped authorities. It was a matter for him how he chose to defend his decisions. Nor do I have to decide whether the submissions constituted state papers. Since they were not quoted verbatim, no obligation to table them could arise.

May I also make the point that I checked on the number of hon. Members who spoke last night. It was a very short debate and the hon. Gentleman spoke for quite a long time. Therefore, I should have thought that he was not unduly starved of material.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I wish to make what I consider to be a reasonable request and I ask that you reflect on it over the weekend. As Speaker, you should approach Lord Justice Scott and Mrs. Pressiley Baxendale QC and ask them for their observations on whether their work would be impeded in any way by questions being freely asked in this House.

I spent part of a morning at No. 1 Buckingham gate, and my impression is that the inquiry is in search of the truth, is taking its job very seriously, welcomes information from wherever it comes and would have no objection whatever to parliamentary questioning. The objections to parliamentary questioning come from the Government and from no one else.

Madam Speaker: I do not think that that is a matter for me. The Leader of the House explained the situation during earlier exchanges.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Will you explain a little bit more about how personal statements are arranged, because one is beginning to get the feeling that they could happen every day? Perhaps we ought to exchange prayers for a confessional period. For example, would the ability to make a personal statement extend to Opposition Members? I have been sacked from Labour's Front Bench twice. Could I have made personal statements? In the unhappy event of my being sacked again, will you bear in mind that I have missed three previous opportunities? Could I take all three chances at once?

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I recognise that Cabinet Ministers who have been sacked or who have resigned will make a statement. We appreciated the remarks made yesterday by the former Chancellor of the Exchequer. May we take it that any Minister, regardless of status, who has resigned or who has been sacked can ask your permission, which is required, to make a personal statement? I say this with the greatest of respect because you obviously could not decide on these matters, given the traditions of the House. The speech by the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton) which we have just heard was an abuse of the House and should not have been made under the guise of a personal statement.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I think that we have probably heard enough points of order on the matter.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington) *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman does rather well; I must have my say now. I have had enough points of order on the matter; I think that I know the mood of some hon. Members. I shall explain. When Ministers of whatever rank leave the Government, they may apply to me to make a statement. It is at my discretion whether the former Minister is able to do so.

Mr. Tony Banks: What about the Opposition?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has not convinced me whether he is on or off the Front Bench. He is like a yo-yo these days. I never quite know where he is.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. My point concerns the timing of personal statements. The one that we have just heard was a parliamentary non-event—a trip down memory lane that might have been made more appropriately during the defence debate next week. We understand that the former Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the right hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), is to make a personal statement on Monday. Three other Ministers have left the Government. Could we not have a job lot? Why did they not all make their statements today so that we could have got the pain over in one go rather than spreading it over a fortnight?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman must understand that personal statements come immediately before we move on to public business.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I thank you for your ruling yesterday, which I do not, of course, question in any way. I seek your further guidance. I make no criticism of the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr. Khabra), the promoter of the Voluntary Euthanasia Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson) and many other hon. Members have received many letters on the subject. Our constituents will not understand why the Bill was not proceeded with under the ten-minute rule procedure yesterday, under which there would have been a vote because I should have opposed the Bill. That would have shown how hon. Members who voted felt about the Bill and I am certain that it would have been heavily defeated. As that procedure was not followed, would you advise the House and, therefore, the country that the Bill still can and will be strongly defeated through the procedures of the House, even though it is presented timidly?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman gives me more powers than I have. As I said yesterday, there can be no objection to the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr. Khabra) presenting a Bill in this way. The House has not refused him leave as he did not ask for leave. The presentation is being made under Standing Order No. 58, to which I refer the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), the House and, if necessary, the country. Standing Order No. 58 states specifically that no leave is necessary. I suggest that hon. Members should write to their constituents explaining Standing Order No. 58.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Would you consider, quite apart from the question of who should or should not make a personal statement—I understand that that is at your discretion—the period after the sacking or resignation has taken place in which such a statement can be made? Personal statements are coming out in dribs and drabs; there could be several others. Consideration should be given to the point that, if anyone wants to make a statement, he should make such a request immediately on his departure from the Government.

Madam Speaker: The decision about whether to allow a personal statement is within my discretion. If I felt that such a statement was totally out of time, I could refuse it. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to pursue the matter further, he may do so through the Select Committee on Procedure.

BILLS PRESENTED

European Parliamentary Elections

Mr. Secretary Howard, supported by the Prime Minister, Mr. Secretary Hurd, Mr. Secretary Gummer, Mr. Secretary Lang, Secretary Sir Patrick Mayhew, Mr. Secretary Redwood and Mr. Peter Lloyd presented a Bill to give effect to a Decision of the Council of the European Communities, 93/jg81/Euratom, ECSC, EEC, of 1st

February 1993 having the effect of increasing the number of United Kingdom representatives to be elected to the European Parliament; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed. [Bill 208.]

VOLUNTARY EUTHANASIA

Mr. Piara S. Khabra, supported by Mr. Tony Banks, Mr. John Austin-Walker and Mr. John Garrett presented a Bill to enable incurably ill patients to ask for euthanasia; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 2 July, and to be printed. [Bill 207.]

PACKAGE HOLIDAYS (LICENSING PROTECTION)

Mr. Nigel Griffiths, supported by Mr. David Jamieson, Mr. John Denham, Mr. Gordon Prentice, Mr. Peter Kilfoyle, Mr. Eric Clarke, Mrs. Bridget Prentice, Mr. Bill Etherington, Mr. Andrew Mackinley, Mr. John Cummings and Mr. Michael Clapham presented a Bill to protect consumers booking package holidays by requiring all persons or bodies organising such holidays for profit to be licensed; and for connected purposes; And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 2 July, and to be printed. [Bill 209.]

Statutory Instruments, &c

Madam Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the motion relating to statutory intruments.

Motion made, Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

MEAT AND LIVESTOCK COMMISSION LEVY

That the draft Meat and Livestock Commission Levy (Variation) Scheme (Confirmation) Order 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments. &c.

PARALYTIC SHELLFISH POISONING

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning) (No. 2) Order 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 1413) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Michael Brown.]*

Question agreed to.

ESTIMATES DAY

[3RD ALLOTTED DAY]

ESTIMATES 1993-94

Class XI, Vote 2

Department of National Heritage

Privacy and Media Intrusion

[Relevant document: The Fourth Report from the National Heritage Committee of Session 1992-93 on Privacy and Media Intrusion (House of Commons Paper No. 294).]

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That a sum not exceeding £26,720,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges that will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1994 for expenditure by the Department of National Heritage and the Royal Fine Arts Commission on administration.—*[Mr. Brooke.]*

4.20 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): I am grateful for this opportunity to debate the report of the National Heritage Committee on privacy and media intrusion.

During the seven months since the Select Committee began active work, it has issued five reports on varying subjects, some of which have already affected Government policy. It is now at work on its sixth inquiry into the future of the BBC. Without being conceited, I think that the Committee can claim that it has played a role in defining the character of a new and very welcome Government Department, the Department of National Heritage. The members of the Committee have established a cordial relationship with the Secretary of State, while keeping at arm's length from him and his Department—so maintaining our independent role of scrutiny.

I am happy to say that, so far, all the reports from the Select Committee have been unanimous. I want to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues for the way in which we have been able to work together. Outside the Committee, all of us are committed party politicians; when we go into the Committee Room, we leave those party differences behind and try to justify the confidence that the House has placed in us to do a job of work on behalf of the whole House.

Until I entered Parliament, I had spent most of my working life as a staff journalist—first as a member of the staff of a mass circulation national tabloid, then on a publication that liked to regard itself as an influential, intellectual weekly. I still write frequently for a variety of publications. I regard myself as a journalist, and my instinct has always been to see matters from the journalist's point of view.

While, as a politician, I have certainly had my differences with various newspapers, including recently being involved in a libel action—which I am relieved to say I won—I do not believe that politicians should whine about what newspapers say about them. We in this House volunteer to be public figures. We dish it out, so we should be ready to take it.

When I worked as Harold Wilson's political press advisor at 10 Downing street, I did my best, whenever possible, to deflect him from complaining about or to the

press. I did not always succeed. I remember that formidable and wise editor of the *Daily Mirror*, Lee Howard, asking me to give a message from him to Harold Wilson when he was Prime Minister. The message was simple: "Stop reading the newspapers." I gave that message also to my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) when he was leader of my party, although he did not invariably observe it. With respect, I offer the same message to the Prime Minister, and perhaps today would be a good day to start.

If the choice is to be between a state-licensed press and an irresponsible, even dishonest, press, my choice would be for an irresponsible press. Governments get away with too much—Governments of all parties. If members of the present Government feel bruised by their treatment by the press—and it is possible that they may—I remind them that that is nothing new, not only for former Labour Governments but for former Tory Governments as well.

If it was Aneurin Bevan who called the British press the most prostituted in the world; it was the Conservative Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, using words provided for him by Rudyard Kipling, who talked about Tory press proprietors of the day aiming at power without responsibility, the prerogative of the harlot through the ages. Lords Rothermere and Beaverbrook ran by-election candidates against Tory Prime Ministers and were responsible for the defeat of Tory candidates, so collisions between the press and Governments of every political persuasion are nothing new.

Our Committee did not set out with the intention of trying to wreak revenge on the press for the discomfort it had caused politicians of any party, or for its treatment of even more exalted persons than those who sit in the House of Commons or in the Chamber along the Corridor. What preoccupied our Committee was the privacy of the private individual.

While we certainly believe, and say in our report, that every individual, whether Prince or Prime Minister, should be entitled to his or her zone of privacy, we also believe that both Prince and Prime Minister, as both have recently shown, have easier access to recourse than does the private citizen. Money and influence and an ability to make contacts can often rectify a felt injury by a public figure, whether that public figure is a politician, a business man, a sports star or a member of the royal family.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Or a Chancellor.

Mr. Kaufman: Or, as my hon. Friend says, a Chancellor too.

It was the evidence of the private individuals before our Select Committee that most affected us. Many in the House, including myself, have been doorstepped, and have found it a daunting experience, with which it is extremely difficult to cope.

How much more daunting must it be, not for somebody who is in public life who encounters the press regularly, who seeks to gain advantage from encounters with the press, but for a private individual, a widow of a service man killed in Northern Ireland by terrorists, a victim of a terrorist bomb outrage, a rape victim still traumatised by her experience, who has never had contact with newspapers except as a reader of them, but who suddenly finds himself or herself harassed, a prisoner in his or her home, unable to leave without being intercepted, with the telephone ringing incessantly throughout the day and sometimes throughout the night as well?

If we here sometimes find it difficult not to say something that leaves us hot with embarrassment or even pain when we see it in print, how does a widow or a victim feel when interviewed and reported by the press? How do they feel when having dealings with their families, when meeting their neighbours, when encountering strangers who recognise them from the brief but traumatic experience of being in the public eye? How do they feel when fabricated words are put into their mouths in order that newspapers should increase their circulations? I am afraid that that has happened. One editor told us in Committee that he regretted having done such a thing in his newspaper.

Newspaper editors who came before us and gave evidence to us told us that few private individuals feel victimised by the press. They said that that was shown by the number of complaints—what they regard as the small number of complaints—that come before the Press Complaints Commission.

Our Select Committee was not at all sure that the number of complaints as reported was accurate. After all, the police report not the total number of crimes but the number of recorded crimes. Similarly, it is impossible to compute the number of people who do not complain about press treatment—not because they have nothing worth complaining about, but because they think that a complaint will get nowhere, or because they do not want to prolong, repeat or relive their trauma.

Even if the numbers are small, for each person who endures it, such treatment is a total experience. That experience—however few or however many undergo it—is, in our view, an unacceptable and intolerable experience. The Select Committee became convinced that the existing press complaints system did not satisfactorily serve the needs of such people.

We also became convinced that the use of modern technology to intercept and record private conversations, or to photograph people in private property without their knowledge, had got completely out of hand. Alleged conversations involving members of the royal family have become the focal point of such concern, although—I repeat—the protection of the royal family or politicians as such was not on our agenda.

We have studied the recently published Calcutt report, but we do not like its main conclusion. We did not believe that self-regulation—or, as we prefer to call it, voluntary regulation—of the press had been given a sufficient chance, even if, so far, that voluntary regulation has been far from perfect.

The Committee was adamant in its view that this country, or any democracy, does not need and should not have legislation dealing specifically with the press—although legislation dealing specifically with television and radio has undoubtedly led to a situation in which there are very few complaints about intrusion into privacy by the electronic media. But there is a difference, and we stated that difference in the report.

The Government must be involved in legislating for the electronic media because of the finite number of frequencies which have to be allocated for television and radio. By contrast, anyone nowadays—sometimes people with paltry funds—can found a publication, and it is part of a free society that they should be able to do so.

[Mr. Kaufman]

We believe that only laws which apply to all citizens should apply to the press. That is why we flatly ruled out any legislation to control, govern and restrict the press as such, and that is why we rejected out of hand Calcutt's proposal for a statutory tribunal. That is why, while I respect and understand the motives of my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), the method proposed in his Bill was not attractive to the Committee.

We therefore looked to the press to enhance its process of voluntary regulation, and made a number of proposals to strengthen such regulation. We proposed that a new press commission should replace the present Press Complaints Commission. We proposed that there should be a majority of lay members on the commission, so that the press should not be seen to sit in judgment, or fail to sit in judgment, on itself.

We proposed a stronger code of practice, and that both editors' and their journalistic staff's contracts of employment should require adherence to the strengthened code of practice. We proposed that journalists should be required to identify themselves when seeking an interview, and to tell interviewees of their rights under the code. We proposed that the Press Commission should have not only the right to order the printing of corrections, but the power to order compensation and to fine.

We made it clear that, in our strong view, none of that should be instituted by statute but should be voluntary. However, we asked ourselves, what should happen if voluntary regulation failed? What if the complainant to the Press Commission is not satisfied? What if a vendetta by some newspapers against one of their number led to an unfair verdict against a newspaper?

We believed that the best way of ensuring that voluntary regulation of the press by the press was effective was to provide a statutory back-up, which, if self-regulation was effective, need never, or hardly ever, be invoked. We suggested a parliamentary ombudsman appointed by the Lord Chancellor in his judicial role.

The ombudsman would be responsible not to any Government but to Parliament. The ombudsman could not be turned to unless the process of voluntary regulation through the press commission had been tried and found wanting. It would not be an alternative to voluntary regulation, but would be a back-up and stimulus to it. We realised that, in the very early days of the existence of such an ombudsman, there might be a considerable number of applications to him or her. However, we anticipated that, before long, the ombudsman would become the last resort.

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on the accuracy and eloquence with which he is stating the findings of the Select Committee. Does he agree that, in coming to the conclusions that he has just described, we were mindful of the possibility that a minority of intransigent editors might exist and that it was for that, hopefully unusual, situation that we were forced to reach those conclusions?

Mr. Kaufman: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for adding to my remarks. He has described accurately one consideration that was in our minds at the time. We had to provide for editors and proprietors who refused to be involved in the press commission, and the ombudsman would be available to ensure that transgressions by such newspapers or proprietors would not go uninspected.

Our hope was that voluntary regulation would work so well that the office of press ombudsman would become a sinecure. However, neither the press commission, nor, in our view, the ombudsman, could deal to our entire satisfaction with the invasions of privacy that had come to our attention. In the United States, where we conducted extensive inquiries during a brief visit, we found that many states had protection of privacy laws. That is in a country which, as we were reminded many times every day, entrenches the freedom of the press in the first amendment to its constitution.

Therefore, we came to the conclusion that certain intrusions into individual privacy, whether by the press or by anybody else, could be prevented or remedied only by a protection of privacy Bill, the ambit of which would cover every person in the land, whether journalist or not.

We recommended that both criminal and civil offences be contained in the Bill. Those included:

"obtaining and/or publishing harmful or embarrassing personal material or photographs; or
obtaining and/or publishing private information (eg. medical records) or photographs without the permission of the person concerned or, where that person is not in a position to give permission, by his next of kin; or publishing inaccurate or misleading personal information; or
violating the peace of another by intruding upon him, or persistently communicating with him."

They were the civil offences which we suggested should be created.

We also suggested a number of criminal offices which included:

"placing a surveillance device on private property without the consent of the lawful occupant, with intent to obtain personal information;
—using a surveillance device (whether on private property or elsewhere) in relation to an individual who is on private property, without the consent of the individual to such use, with intent to obtain personal information about that individual;
—taking a photograph, or recording the voice, of an individual who is on private property, without his consent to the taking or recording, with intent that the individual shall be identifiable;
—publishing of a recording or an intimate photograph of an individual taken without consent;
—entering private property without the consent of the lawful occupant with intent to obtain personal information;
—the buying, selling or retention of any recording without the permission of the person on the tape; or of any material obtained through eavesdropping or use of long-range cameras where any of the parties was aware that the material was procured through illegal means or suspected it to be so obtained; and publication of any recording or material so obtained even where no financial transaction was involved".

We also recommended the further offence of the deliberate interception of calls made on mobile phones and

"the enactment of a criminal offence to prohibit harassment or besetting."

We recommended that, for criminal and civil offences, there should be a public interest defence. We also recommended that, for civil actions, under our proposed protection of privacy legislation and for defamation proceedings, legal aid should be available. However, we believe that there should be a greater role for the press in a democracy. That is why we disagreed with Calcutt and said that the commission's responsibilities must include the right to campaign for press freedom. We also believe

that, if the press are to be given greater responsibilities, they—and everyone else in the land—must be granted greater access to information, and by right.

We call on the Government to take effective action to extend the public's right of access to information, to take that action as quickly as possible, and certainly to take it no later than they implement our other recommendations. We said that our recommendations, including the right of access to information, came as a package, and that, if any of our recommendations was to be implemented, they should all be implemented.

The Committee was not starry-eyed. We knew that our report would be greeted with outrage in many quarters of the press. I read the press reports with some interest. One newspaper denounced us out of hand, while printing an alleged summary of our report. It was full of inaccuracies or, as that newspaper would certainly say if talking about any of us, full of lies. Another newspaper published a huge leading article denouncing our report without publishing a single word of the report, not even the briefest summary of it, thus giving its readers a good opportunity to make up their mind about our recommendations.

The Press Complaints Commission said that a number of our recommendations were not only wrong but impracticable. However, when the dust settled, it began implementing some of them. We recommended the setting up of a hotline for people who feared that they might be misrepresented or damaged by a potential press report. We were told that our recommendation was stupid. The Press Complaints Commission has now decided to set up what it calls a "helpline", which

"members of the public may ring if they believe the code is likely to be breached in respect of their own affairs."

That is excellent.

We were worried about payment for articles and the invasion of privacy. The Press Complaints Commission has strengthened its code in both respects. We recommended a majority of lay members for the commission. The Press Complaints Commission has decided that it will in future have an absolute majority of lay members as well as a lay chairman.

We recommended that editors and journalistic staff should be required to have observation of the code written into their contracts. That recommendation was greeted with particular indignation as utter nonsense, but now the Press Complaints Commission is recommending that employers make the code part of the journalists' contract, and that it should apply equally to editors.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): This is a delicate issue, and I admire my right hon. Friend's usual thoroughness. Has he received any reaction to that recommendation from the Guild of Newspaper Editors? My constituent, Colin Mailer, was the previous president of the guild. I was invited to the guild's annual meeting. I know that it was especially concerned about how such a recommendation would be written into a contract. Perhaps my right hon. Friend will deal with that, when he winds up.

Mr. Kaufman: We had no direct reaction, but there have been individual reactions, some very gratifying.

We recommended that the Press Complaints Commission should be more open to third-party complaints, and it has agreed that acceptance of third-party complaints should be "appropriately and constructively exercised". We recommended training for journalists in self-regulation, and the commission is carrying out that recommendation. We also recommended that journalists should identify themselves when seeking interviews. That recommendation was said to be especially preposterous, but the Press Complaints Commission has now endorsed it.

A further recommendation was that the code of practice should be made available in languages commonly used in this country. That, too, has been accepted, as was our recommendation that "jigsaw identification" should be prevented.

Despite the industry's initial adverse reaction to our report, it has seen the sense of much of what we proposed and has acted on it. I am delighted about that, not only because our proposals are to be implemented, but because our contention that voluntary regulation could work if given the chance is being vindicated. We look to the industry to adopt the remainder of our recommendations.

In addition—this is, in a sense, a response to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell)—individual newspapers have taken their own action. When we were in the United States, the Committee met the readers' representative of the *Washington Post*, a most formidable and impressive woman. She told us that not only did she have readers' complaints submitted to her but she was given a regular column in which she could write what ever she liked, no matter how critical of the newspaper. The material was not seen by the editor until he read it in his copy of the published newspaper. We recommended that that example be followed here.

I am delighted that the *Manchester Evening News* has done so. It has appointed Professor Peter Cole as a wholly independent readers' representative with his own regular column. Not only is the *Manchester Evening News* the most current newspaper in my constituency, but I must declare an interest in that I write regularly for it. I do not know whether the readers' representative will have to deal with any complaints about what I write in the newspaper, but, if so, I am sure that it will be done with the throughness that we can expect of Professor Cole.

The industry has acted, although it has not gone as far as we should like. I shall understand entirely if the Secretary of State is unable to tell the House of any conclusions today, but it is for the Government to act too. We hope that they will, and that they will do so in three ways: by establishing the statutory press ombudsman, by enacting protection of privacy legislation and by taking action to extend the right of access to information. As I say, I do not expect a specific response in today's debate, although we look forward to a response from the Government as soon as they are in a position to reach conclusions.

Mr. Gorst: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the improvements that have occurred since the report was published do not invalidate the recommendations to which he has asked the Government to respond, and that, while the press has moved some way, it has not moved sufficiently far?

Mr. Kaufman: I agree, and I go further. I do not believe that, had our Committee not conducted its inquiry, we should have got any of those improvements. Nor do I believe that we should have achieved them had the Committee not made its other recommendations, including the proposal for a statutory ombudsman. That is

[Mr. Kaufman]

why we cannot be complacent about the improvements that have been achieved so far. It is essential for the Government to enact our whole package of proposals.

Whatever the press do and whatever the Government do, the press will not be perfect, and we do not expect it to be so. Journalism is a rough old trade, and long may it continue to be so. Criticism of the press is prevalent today, but that is not new. Nothing that any hon. Member says can match the coruscating verses of the poet Humbert Wolfe, who wrote:

"You cannot hope to bribe or twist,
Thank God, the British journalist.
But seeing what the man will do
Unbribed, there's no occasion to."

We in the House of Commons do not ask for kindness towards us. Nor do we ask for kindness towards others who have power, authority or influence. We seek what was put to us during our visit to the United States by an American authority on journalism who is also a stout champion of press freedom.

Dr. Leonard Sussman, professor in journalism at New York university, told our Committee:

"A new element should be added to all the older ethnical standards. Call it compassion. Many journalists argue that this is not their concern—just delivering the facts is their responsibility, they say. The 'public rejection of some American news reporting stems from just such criticism, however expressed in public discourse. Lack of compassion is at the base of many journalistic problems with privacy, uncouth methods and similar complaints. Failure to recognise or sympathise with the plight of news subjects can produce unsophisticated and misleading journalism."

If the outcome of the inquiry by our Select Committee is to induce the press in this country to accept that guiding principle, our work will have been worth while.

4.53 pm

Mr. Paul Channon (Southend, West): The House will be aware that the Select Committee report was unanimous. Much of the credit for that must go to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and his colleagues, but particularly to the right hon. Gentleman for the way in which he conducted the Committee's proceedings.

It was forbearing of many hon. Members on these Benches to be so polite to the right hon. Gentleman, who has not, throughout his long career in the House, always been polite to all of us. Indeed, he made in an otherwise extremely good book some totally scurrilous and unfortunate remarks about me. I have not re-read them recently, but if anybody tells me that they intend to read them, or have read them, I say immediately that they are inaccurate. In other words, the right hon. Gentleman can dish it out as well.

I do not have the right hon. Gentleman's journalistic experience. Even so, I am anxious that the Secretary of State understands, as I am sure he does, that when I say that the report was unanimous, I mean that every member of the Committee felt at the end of the day that a real contribution had been made and that we were expressing a view of a cross-section of hon. Members with very different political views.

That in itself is interesting, for one must wonder whether a consensus is not beginning to emerge in the House. I appreciate that there is not unanimity. Some think that no action whatever is required, although, when one thinks of this Select Committee report, of the strong support that the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) got for his measure—it may not have been strong enough, but at least it was a powerful demonstration of the feelings of the House—and the approval that was given to the measure introduced earlier by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher), it seems that any differences of view on the issue are emerging not between but among the parties. Not many hon. Members will disagree with much of what is said in the Select Committee's report.

The right hon. Member for Gorton went into the report in detail, so I will not delay the House by quoting from it at length. A point that must be stressed time and again is summed up in paragraph 3:

"a free society requires the freedom to say or print things that are inconvenient to those in authority, whether they be members of the royal family, Ministers, Members of Parliament, local councillors, or public officials. While continual antagonism between the press and persons in authority is unnecessary, critical tension between them is an essential ingredient of a democratic society and is far preferable to collusion between the press and public figures."

I and, I fancy, every member of the Select Committee, believe that strongly. I do not know any hon. Member who wants to damage the freedom of the press, although I fear that the press will not believe that.

We were trying to deal with the issue into which the right hon. Member for Gorton went in some detail—that is the appalling situation that can confront not people with privilege, riches or power, but ordinary people who, through no fault of their own, are suddenly thrust into a situation that is of itself traumatic but in which they may also have to deal with the press and suffer intrusion into their privacy.

Anyone who reads the moving accounts of the situations described by widows of Northern Ireland soldiers will appreciate what can happen in such cases. That is unacceptable in our society. It has gone on for too long and has got worse in recent years. We must now do something about it.

Hon. Members are aware of cases where people have been treated abominably. Nobody knows the number of such cases—we are told that there are few complaints—but there is considerable evidence that most people do not want to complain. They do not want to relive the whole episode. They fear that the press will rake over everything again, so they may not make a formal complaint.

What should be done about the situation? I suggest that there must be a balance. I do not see why the privacy of ordinary people should be affected in the way that the report describes. When giving evidence, Adam Raphael said that the Select Committee had to be concerned with other than ordinary citizens. Those whose privacy was invaded were not always ordinary persons, he pointed out, and he had a point. Everyone is entitled to a zone of privacy, as the report points out.

But those most under threat are ordinary people, such as widows whose husbands are killed or die in car crashes or in similarly awful circumstances. In those cases, the people directly involved suffer, in addition to the tragedy and trauma, the attentions of the press.

We were told by an important editor, Mr. Whittam Smith, that the press were

"rough, rude, brutal and sometimes nasty."

I accept that, and we expect it to continue to be so. But could complete self-regulation work in such a way that the

incidents described to us would be avoided? I think not. But should Parliament take no action and let the situation remain as it is?

There is another situation, which I am sure that all hon. Members realise exists, although I am not sure that this is realised outside the House. I refer to the ease with which conversations are bugged and photographs taken. It is almost impossible nowadays to hold a private conversation if there are people determined to listen in to it. I wonder whether the public realise that the techniques are now so sophisticated, and becoming so increasingly sophisticated, that there is a real danger to private conversations and private actions if people are determined to listen in and watch.

I believe that there can be a consensus in the House on several points—for instance, on action on surveillance devices. Surely my right hon. Friend will look at this situation. We recommend some licensing system, or something like that. Some of these devices are freely available in certain parts of our country—I will not say where—and the Government should really look at this seriously and take some action before what is already a scandal becomes a major scandal.

For instance, it should be illegal to use surveillance devices on private property. Photographing or recording people on private property, entering private property without consent—all such things should be offences.

There has to be a defence, as the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton rightly said. If such action is taken to prevent or detect a crime, or in cases where exposure will ensure that the public are not misled by the individual concerned, of course there is a perfectly proper public defence consideration. But, where no such defence exists, the House might well think that the time has come for some protection of privacy along the lines suggested by the right hon. Member for Gorton, as inspired at least in part by the Committee's trip to the United States.

Those are extremely important changes, which I hope that the House will agree to accept.

I also believe—although I have never been such an enthusiast about this as others are—that the Government must now go further with the right to know. Where is the White Paper promised to us by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster before the House rises? Perhaps my right hon. Friend could tell us how that is getting along, and whether we can be assured that we shall get some further information about the Government's feelings on the right to know before we rise for the summer recess.

Although I do not agree with all the mechanisms suggested by the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), I certainly agree that action needs to be taken to require newspapers to be accurate. I believe that they try to be accurate, but he suggested a great deal more in his Bill, for which I voted on Second Reading, and I hope that those things will not be lost purely because his Bill has been lost.

The critical point is whether any further steps should be taken beyond the self-regulatory system that exists at the present time. The right hon. Member for Gorton said that, although some of the recommendations in the report have been criticised, some have been carried out already. Nevertheless, as I think the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) pointed out, we asked for £50 and they have given us 50p. I do not know whether that is an accurate quote, but it is about right. The House should not be under any illusion that any of the major changes that we think should be made have been made in the last few months.

Much more must be done to improve the working of the Press Complaints Commission, which I believe should be rechristened the press commission. It should have a wider role; it should deal with third-party complaints. I am glad that it already has a hot line. That is a step forward, but there is a great deal more to be done.

The time has come for a regulatory level beyond the complaints commission. Those who feel dissatisfied with the investigation or the outcome of their complaint should have the right, in exceptional circumstances, to go to a press ombudsman. This is not a novel idea. There is an ombudsman in a whole range of professions—if journalism is a profession—and in other walks of life. This has not caused endless difficulty or trouble, or made professions feel that they are downtrodden.

In a modern society, it is only fair that there should be a press ombudsman who can, in the last resort, investigate complaints; who has power to require publication of corrections and, in extreme circumstances, the payment of compensation, and indeed to impose a fine for persistent breaches of a code of practice.

The main efforts must be devoted to codes of practice. I am sure that the majority of the press want codes of practice, want to regulate themselves, want to enforce the codes of practice and want journalists to sign those codes. I believe that they would often take action against journalists who did not abide by the codes of practice, but that is not yet universally true.

This is an issue that will not now go away. In the past few years, the House has often expressed views about the press. I do not expect my right hon. Friend to tell us today, of course, but I hope that the Government will take on board the fact that there is very widespread feeling on both sides of the House that something more now needs to be done to protect the sort of people that I have described in the way that I have described, without posing a threat to freedom of the press in this country.

Nobody wants that. We must not be misled by what the press say we think. We know that it is not true. We know that methods can be devised along the lines of our report that would not shackle the press, but would nevertheless be a tremendous step forward.

I ask my right hon. Friend to consider this very seriously. I believe that, if the Government do not take action, this is something to which the House will return again and again until such action is taken.

5.6 pm

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): One of the things that came across most clearly in our Committee's inquiries was the widespread use and growth of technology. We had a perfect example yesterday, which was a remarkable day. We had the former Chancellor of the Exchequer explaining why he had resigned, but he did not go into —and I wish that he had—how much he had suffered at the hands of the press. I am thinking particularly of the business of his credit card and what it had been used for, including the insinuation that he had used it in a sleazy area of Paddington to buy a bottle of cheap champagne and a box of cigars.

This was proved to be totally false. Why *The Standard* rushed this story out and got it all wrong, I do not know.

[Mr. Joseph Ashton]

But that story went round the world in the middle of top-level financial discussions in Brussels, and the then Chancellor had to rush to the phone and deny it. That sort of thing shows what the press is coming to. I am not saying that the way a Chancellor of the Exchequer runs his credit card affairs is not of public interest; of course it is of public interest, and everyone in that position must accept that. but how was that knowledge acquired?

It is now very easy to get that sort of knowledge. The growth of technology is such that it is impossible for anybody to have any privacy at all in any situation.

There was a similar situation a couple of months earlier, when the then Secretary of State for National Heritage, the right hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), had his private affairs splashed all across the newspapers. There is nothing new in that for politicians. What is new is that the bedroom in which he was alleged to be conducting an affair with an actress was bugged. The tape was then sold to a Sunday paper, *The People*, for £30,000. The story took off and was spread round the country.

We now have a disgraceful state of affairs in which it is no longer necessary to blackmail a prominent person. All that is necessary is to record the conversation and sell it to a newspaper, which will pay the virtual blackmailer the money and he will not have to go to gaol. That is the situation that has developed in the last two or three years, and it is frightening. Bugging and long-range photography have given newspapers the same power as the KGB, the Stasi, J. Edgar Hoover and anybody else throughout history who wished to have secret information at their disposal.

If the Government have that power, through MI6 or whatever, perhaps there is a case for it. But if private individuals have that power to use how and when they like, to smash people or Governments or attack royalty, making enormous profits out of the abuse of technology, there obviously have to be some curbs.

The long-range technology enabled photographs of the Duchess of York to be taken when she was sunbathing beside a bathing pool in France. Again, people said that royalty must expect such attention. I disagree. If I were to go into the ladies' lavatory and take pictures, I would be quite rightly arrested. I would be accused of invasion of privacy. I would be breaking the law and, quite rightly, I would have to appear in court.

But because a member of the royal family has stripped off and is topless besides a bathing pool on private premises—the technology is such that pictures can be taken from half a mile away—newspaper editors seem to think that that is fair game.

The Committee interviewed technology experts, who told us that photographs could be taken from almost a mile away. All that would inhibit a picture being taken is smoke or something similar in the atmosphere. The picture would be perfect and life-size. A camera could be sent up in a small aircraft over Buckingham palace. Everything could be photographed and printed, and no one could complain. No one could say a word about that.

I do not know anyone in a public position—royalty, Cabinet Ministers, whoever—can expect to do their job, or have their marriage survive, if such technological invasion of privacy is allowed to continue. The newspaper editors make the point that such stories are in the public interest and that the public want to know about the lives and the private lives of those people. They say that that is how one judges whether people are suitable for their job. There may be a case for saying that, but newspapers are using technology to invade the lives of ordinary, private people, as we heard in Committee and as other hon. Members have said.

It is distressing for a woman whose husband has been killed by the IRA two or three days before to have a pack of hounds on her doorstep, pushing their cameras right up to the windows to take pictures. We heard evidence from the woman who was falsely accused of taking letters from Princess Anne's wardrobe when she worked for the princess as a maid. The accusation was entirely false. Journalists sat outside her house and she had to sit on her stairs. She could not go to the shops and could not get any food.

When the widows of IRA victims go to their husband's funerals, photographers climb trees and invade the privacy of the service. They turn it into a sort of Hollywood funeral that one thought had gone out with Rudolph Valentino or Elvis Presley. That is not on. It is unfair to ordinary people who, through no fault of their own, find themselves pitchforked into the news. Because they are news that week, they are followed by an army of freelance journalists. The journalists are not so freelance; one editor told the Committee that a journalist could be hired for £70 a day.

All that the national newspapers in London do is telephone a freelance journalist wherever the story occurs —in Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Scotland or wherever. They say, "Go down there and sit on the doorstep. Get an exclusive quote and an exclusive picture. If you cannot get one from there, go and see the mother or father." So the relatives are hounded.

One of the women whose husband was shot by the IRA said that she was convinced that it was as a result of the distress, the harassment, the phone calls right through the night and the continual attention from the press that her father died some months afterwards. The family was not left alone. The Army advised the family to make a statement and then ask the press to go away. But a month later, people were still coming to the door wanting an exclusive. Someone came who was writing a feature for a colour supplement. Someone came who was making a television film about the story. The harassment went on and on.

The brave lady who was the victim of the vicarage rape case in Fulham about five years ago, and who has since written a book about it, told the Committee what she had to go through. She could not go down the street without being recognised. The newspapers printed a photograph of her. She could be recognised by the clothes she wore. Interviews with the father were published in the newspapers. It was a dreadful form of harassment.

In my constituency last Christmas, a 14-year-old girl had a baby unbeknown to her parents. She hid the baby on a golf course. One might say that it was an appropriate thing to do at Christmas. She told her friend to tell someone where the baby was. The newspapers could not print the details because the girl was 14. But the newspapers found out where the family lived. They put offers of cash through the letterbox. They continually pestered the family.

The journalists said that they were working for *The Sun*. The newspaper categorically denied that anyone from

The Sun was working on that story, but the jackals on the doorstep said that they were working for *The Sun*. They are a disgrace to their profession. They are often employed by no one. They are touts who are out to get something to sell, and they will sit on doorsteps until they do.

The Committee has recommended that there should be a code of conduct for journalists. They should be required to carry identification, so that, when innocent people wish to complain, they have the name and address of the person who wanted an interview.

How do we define public interest? It was all very well for the editors who appeared before the Committee to say that it was in the public interest to print stories about public people in the public eye, but where does one draw the line? Is a traffic warden a public official? Is a vicar's wife a public official? We said, "What about stories such as 'The bonking traffic warden and the vicar's wife'?" The editors said that such people were in the public eye. That is nonsense. Such people are entitled to their privacy, just like anyone else.

What opportunity do people have to complain? They can sue for libel. Every newspaper has a top-class lawyer who peruses every word before anything is printed. Often he will tell an editor not to print something because it is libellous, but because the editor is under threat of competition and knows that his job might not be there in six months—he has about as much job security as a football manager—he takes a chance and publishes the story.

Then what can the person who is the subject of the story do? If he is Elton John or Ken Dodd, he can hire Sir George Carman or some prominent QC or libel lawyer. He may have to gamble £200,000 to win half a million. The rich can protect themselves. A rape victim or the widow of an IRA victim has no such chance. So such people go to the Press Complaints Commission.

After a long investigation, they may receive an apology at the bottom of page 9 of the newspaper. I went twice to the former Press Council and won on both occasions. The process is stretched out to deter people from pursuing it. Unless one is a professional person with access to typewriters, office equipment and so on, it is a daunting prospect.

If people receive merely an apology, they think, "Why bother?" Why should they go through the rigmarole and be forced to relive their experience? That is especially upsetting if the story is the death of a child, a horrendous murder or something similar in which they have been put under stress.

We have recommended a halfway solution. We have had a good system for many years, as you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of unfair dismissal compensation. If people are given a rough ride by their employer and he has sacked them unfairly, they can go to a small tribunal. People do not need to employ a lawyer. The tribunal can award £5,000 or £10,000, which will give them a good holiday or buy them a new car as some compensation for their ordeal. Why cannot we have the same for people who have suffered a great deal of harassment at the hands of the press even though the story was not libellous?

Newspapers should understand that such a system would be in their interest. Instead of having to gamble £200,000 in lawyers' costs to go to court, they could admit that they were unfair and that the family suffered. The press commission that we recommend could award £5,000 or £10,000 to alleviate some of the problems that the family faces.

Mr. Gorst: Would the hon. Gentleman include in his strictures a certain well-heeled ex-politician who lives in a castle? He has invaded the privacy of countless people, not only politicians, and has splurged stories all over the broadsheet press. I believe that £200,000 has been mentioned. Does he believe that people who are named in that fashion should also have recourse to such a complaints process?

Mr. Ashton: I think that anybody should be able to. Sometimes it is not the cash—it is the fact that a person has been vindicated in some way. If one has been unfairly sacked, one may not want the job back or be too bothered about the money, but one wants an admission of unfair treatment. That remedy should be open to anybody, irrespective of whether they are high, low, famous, public figures or whoever.

It would evolve as the unfair dismissal tribunals have evolved, through building up case histories, so that they often never reach a tribunal. The lawyer who is an expert on it, or the chairman of the tribunal, will point to sufficient precedents and the employer will pay up rather than have the bad odour. I think that newspapers would do that, and it would at least be a remedy of some kind.

We cannot make any of the recommendations in our report statutory. I probably took a harder line than any other member of the Committee, because I worked for newspapers for many years and worked in Fleet street for nine years. I know how they operate. I am not trying to curb them, because in many investigations they do a good job, and I agreed with the other members of the Committee that we cannot have statutory controls. The best kind of regulation is self-regulation.

What the press needs is a highway code which its members will police themselves. Where the real highway code is concerned, I agree that very few people always keep to a 30 mph limit but not many go at 50 or 60 mph, and if they knock somebody down they will have to pay compensation; they risk being fined or having their licences endorsed. There are curbs and, generally speaking, they work. The system is not perfect, but it works.

We have recommended a highway code for the press. If they can police it themselves and make it work, no one will be happier than the politicians. If the situation continues as at present, however, a rat race based solely on circulation and newspaper profits, then sanctions will have to be brought in by Parliament, as Calcutt recommended. We have gone past the last chance saloon.

At present, understandably and perhaps advised by their lawyers, the press are reserving judgment on what we have done. They attacked us and abused us in the early stages. They came to the Committee and told us that Miss Whiplash had given them a list of her 227 clients, and that many hon. Members might be on it. It was very stupid to abuse a jury in that way, and those who did it were castigated by the rest of the press, 99 per cent. of whom would welcome something like this. They are responsible people, and would like to have this system.

Our recommendation that the Press Commission should have power to fine a newspaper may seem draconian, but it is not unusual for a professional body to do so. The Law Society can strike people off or fine them,

[Mr. Ashton]

as can other professional bodies. One leading journalist asked me for an example of circumstances in which the Press Commission would fine a newspaper.

The example that I gave was that of *The Sun* breaking the embargo on the Queen's Speech and printing it three days before everyone else. When the palace complained, *The Sun* said,

"We'll see you in court, Your Majesty",

and put a picture of the Queen's look-alike on the front page. It caused a great deal of anger among other newspapers, because a good story had been pre-empted. In those circumstances, the press commission would be right to impose a fine. *The Sun* backed down very quickly and paid £200,000 to a charity nominated by the palace, because it realised that it had overstepped the mark.

People may say that it is trivial to quote the football industry, but there is a club today, Barnet, which looks like going out of existence because it has been fined £50,000 by the Football League and cannot pay it. The Football League does punish players who spit at the referee or otherwise bring the game into disrepute, and it works. It would work with the press, too, if the press reacted when they felt that their industry had been brought into disrepute and their image needed improving. It is time that they began to look like responsible people and not undisciplined hooligans out for a cheap headline.

If the Minister will not tell us in his reply what he intends to do, I hope that there will be something in the Queen's Speech, and that he will perhaps have discussions in the summer with the Press Complaints Commission, as it now is, and move forward to a press commission and probably have discussions with Calcutt as well. But what we have recommended as a Committee—I stress what the right hon. Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) has said—must be an all-party business, a House of Commons matter, or it is worthless. It must carry the House and the public with it.

The genuinely serious members of the press, all of those on local newspapers who do a marvellous job, will accept what we are recommending. This is a damned good report, and it will benefit victims of the press and the public in general.

5.24 pm

Dr. John G. Blackburn (Dudley, West): The very nature of the debate today is both remarkable and unique. The House has long awaited an opportunity to examine and debate some of the findings of Sir David Calcutt. The House showed considerable interest in and enthusiasm for the private Member's Bill introduced by the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley). I pay a warm and generous tribute to him for introducing that Bill, the greatest features of which lay in the title, which is precious beyond words—freedom and responsibility of the press. I cannot accept that any hon. Member would do other than defend press freedom, but with one voice we would say that along with that freedom must go responsibilities. That is why I was sad that the Bill did not make the progress that it deserved.

The debate is also unique because of the document I have in my hand—the report of the Select Committee on the media and their intrusion into privacy. I had the honour to serve on that Committee. I say, not in any condescending way—because that would be offensive—but with all the sincerity that I can muster, that the report reflects great credit on the Chairman, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), and then in our own way, as members of the Committee, we take our place in unanimously supporting his submission of the report.

Is that enough? No, it is not. The most important reason for the debate is that the public at large have shown such disquiet and anxiety about the performance of the press that the general feeling is that someone somewhere should be doing something about it. A few moments ago the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) carried everybody with him when he said that some things are sacred, some things are traditional and some things are part of the fabric of our society, and that the Queen's Christmas message is one of them. For it to be violated by the press in the way it was, so graphically described by the hon. Gentleman, is something that the British public will find it difficult to forget or forgive.

If there is this public disquiet, there is another reason for this debate, because my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is sitting here on the Government Front Bench. I tell him, as my friend, that the people and the Committee are waiting with bated breath for the Government's decision, based on the wealth of research and evidence in the Department. There is national disquiet. No responsible, reasonable and sober critic of the press can conclude other than that the press is descending below the acceptable level that the people of this country are entitled to expect from a free and responsible press.

The dominant issue in the Calcutt report and the theme of the private Member's Bill of the hon. Member for Hammersmith comprised two questions: does the report go far enough and, as the Committee's Chairman said, what action should be taken? The House and the nation are entitled to a response from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State at the appropriate time. I echo all hon. Members when I say that we do not expect a decision from the Secretary of State tonight. However, we expect the issue to be a high priority in his work. He must respond, not only to the Committee but to the public.

On quiet reflection, I believe that the excellent Select Committee report rendered people one of the most valuable pieces of public service. I am not being mealy mouthed—I and other members of the Committee wrote the report, of which I am proud. I am confident that its pages contain the answers to the problems of the press industry.

What are those problems? Between January 1991 and July 1992, there were more than 2,000 complaints against the press—those are only the recorded complaints. They are listed in volume II, paragraph 35 and table 4. We want to defend the profession, but more than 1,000 of those complaints involved accuracy. Examples have been given this afternoon of articles that bore no relationship to the truth—I am being generous when I say that.

I well remember having my name dragged through the pages of local and national newspapers because of something that I had allegedly said. I stood as a simple soul, cried and said that it was not me. The newspapers printed the piece again and again, and I said that I was not involved. Finally, on the back page, under the football results, an apology was printed. The person involved was the late Mr. John Heddle, former Member of Parliament for Mid-Staffordshire.

It is outrageous that people can be treated in that way. I am not complaining because if one enters public and political life, that is one of the burdens one carries. I do not believe that any hon. Member will put his head on the pillow at night and cry about the way in which the press has treated him, as that is part and parcel of our life.

The report also reveals the action taken by the editorial staff and the commission in trying to deal with the problem. The more evidence we received, the more sickened I became at the level of certain sections of the press. It is part of my parliamentary duties to serve on the Select Committee. The other members of the Committee and I accepted that task with honour. In doing so, I found that one of our great challenges was that we should not conduct an inquiry within our own terms of reference to protect the good and the great—to use the Chairman's phrase. We have to find the evidence among the humble and lowly of society, and see what they have to say.

We did not investigate the case of the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) or my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor). I would never be part of an inquiry relating to members of our gracious royal family. We did not investigate the case of my right hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) or the publicity surrounding the television personality, Frank Bough. However, our investigations made me more and more alarmed.

I wonder whether the general public know what we know and have the quality of the evidence that we have. It would be wrong of me to return to the ground so ably covered by my colleagues, but I shall relate one story—I do not know whether the public will be able to grasp it. Two humble, single wives and mothers whose husbands had been killed in Northern Ireland 24 hours earlier while serving their country came before the Committee. In their time of grief and tragedy, those women were abused by the press and the media in a totally objectionable manner. Other people who had come face to face with the press while going about their daily business came before the Committee. Many of them had had their businesses and families ruined as a result.

The greatest quality that we have is our character—our nature. I almost wept when people came before the Committee and said, "My character has been destroyed —my very nature has been destroyed by the press." The wonderful House of Commons is today declaring that it will defend those people, and I shall be holding the banner of the Select Committee report to ensure that we do so.

Other recommendations have been made. I summon all my courage and tentatively suggest that all newspaper editorial boards should decree that each board member should have the Select Committee report as compulsory reading. Only then will they realise the problems that the press has inflicted on the public. My early Christmas wish this year is that they will read the report and learn what the public think about them.

There is a need for guidance and for a code of conduct, backed up by an ombudsman. If I can convey nothing else to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State today, I hope that my cry for an ombudsman will be heard by him. I am sure he will deal with the subject later.

What have I learnt that might help in this tragic situation? I want to support a free and responsible press. First, we need a complete review of the law of trespass. It is outrageous that people can trespass on and gain entry to other people's property. The answer to that lies with Parliament. We need to control photography, too. As we learned in the Committee, it is possible to place a device the size of a fountain pen in a room and record conversations from 150 yd away. That accords with what my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) said——

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): Is my hon. Friend aware that Sir David English, chairman of the Press Complaints Commission's code of conduct committee, is reviewing all these matters, particularly harassment and the laws of trespass?

Dr. Blackburn: I am obliged to my hon. Friend. I am sure that the whole House is delighted to hear that.

Evidence was brought to us by editor after editor, and I took it on myself to investigate the subject of payment for articles. I repeatedly asked editors who were household names whether they practised cheque book journalism. To judge from the replies, one might have thought that they operate in cathedrals, monasteries or synagogues; they all said that they would never indulge in that sort of behaviour. I told them that when I read a story in a newspaper I might form an opinion about it, but if it said at the bottom that £10,000 had been paid for the story, I might form a different opinion. There have been many cases of articles being published, whereupon three weeks later it has been revealed that £30,000 or more was paid for them—or even as much as £200,000. I think that the public are entitled to know when a fee has been paid.

The House has always been very generous to me, for which I am grateful. I conclude on a personal note. Eleven years ago, I suffered a major cardiac arrest. I found myself in a national health service hospital—God bless it—in the intensive care unit on a life support machine. I suffered, I endured and—hallelujah—I survived. On the third day, a nurse came in and said that the press were outside and wanted to photograph me. If that is the kind of press that we have, one is tempted to wash one's hands of them.

This problem can be resolved. My prayer is that the Select Committee report will be an important step in this reformation process. I believe that, with good will on the part of the press, Parliament and the public, we will get a press of which we can justly be proud. I commend the Select Committee's report to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

5.46 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): I welcome this debate, and I am grateful to the Select Committee for making this day available for discussion of an issue that attracts widespread interest. This is a subject about which feelings run high, not least among hon. Members. It is not only in Parliament that feelings run high—they also run high in pubs, clubs and on the streets.

No one can accuse the Select Committee of failing to tackle the issue head on. Its proceedings made for gripping television, not least when the editor of *The Sun* was put through his paces. I congratulate the Committee on the report. In particular, I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), who made a typically stimulating and incisive contribution to the debate. Although, on behalf of the Labour party, I cannot accept all the report's conclusions, there is much that I can endorse.

[Mrs. Ann Clwyd]

I am also impressed by the rave notices that the Select Committee received: almost universal condemnation from the editors of Fleet street. A representative sample must be that from Peter Preston, editor of *The Guardian*, who said that the report

"is like wearing 15 overcoats in case it rains . . . It just seems baffling—and if it seems baffling to editors, heaven knows how baffling it will be for the public."

If the report appeared baffling to editors of Fleet street, I am worried about their powers of comprehension.

Andrew Neil, editor of the *Sunday Times*, said:

"It is a busybodies' charter drawn up by busybodies for busybodies. They want to interfere with and regulate every area of newspaper production. They are out to protect themselves."

The assistant editor of *The Sun* said that the recommendations

"reek of hypocrisy. MPs are just trying to look after themselves rather than being concerned about ordinary people."

When was the editor of *The Sun* ever concerned about the feelings of ordinary people?

Lord McGregor, chairman of the Press Complaints Commission, said that the use of the phrase "ombudsman" was

"a polite euphemism to disguise the fact that it would be direct Government interference in the press"—

but even he would.

Labour agrees with the Select Committee that the Press Complaints Commission has not worked effectively. All too often, sections of the press have disregarded basic standards of accuracy, impartiality and sensitivity in their chase for circulation. Like several hon. Members who spoke earlier, I am also a former member of the press and a member of the National Union of Journalists. The Opposition do not accept that Calcutt's notion of a statutory tribunal is the right response; nor do we believe that the press would be improved by Government-appointed censors of either party. There would be enormous potential for abuse, with Government bodies intervening to dictate official versions of the truth.

The Select Committee report proposes the setting up of a voluntary press commission with powers to instruct newspapers to pay compensation and to fine newspapers. The Committee also proposes the appointment of an ombudsman. The mind of such a figure, even though he was appointed, would be independent of the interests involved and would involve the Government in less odium than the Calcutt proposals.

The Select Committee proposals cannot simply be swept aside by generalised protests about press freedom, but we are somewhat concerned that the proposed appeal system could lead to complaints being dealt with on a protracted basis. There is an old maxim that justice delayed is justice denied, and there is a danger that the proposals for a press commission, an ombudsman and an appeal to the High Court could introduce an over-complicated system. Therefore, we have still to be persuaded about that.

We have always supported the proposal for a statutory right of reply which would be geared solely to the correction of factual inaccuracies. It would not involve censoring the press, and it is regrettable that some sections of the press have sought to suggest otherwise. My personal support for a right of reply is probably well known. I introduced a right of reply Bill in 1987 and a number of colleagues, including my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), introduced similar Bills. The Government's opposition to such a proposal calls into question their professed desire that the press should maintain the highest standards of accuracy.

The issue of privacy and its frequent invasion by the media presents the Government and the Opposition with difficult choices. Calcutt and the Select Committee support a privacy Bill. On the surface that seems fine, but in practice there are likely to be fiendishly difficult problems, not the least of which involves defining what is in the public interest. It is easy for us to say that we believe in upholding privacy for ordinary individuals and that bugging devices in people's homes and the use of long lenses are outrageous infringements of the privacy of those going about their daily business.

Some problems arise in connection with public figures, such as the royal family, Members of Parliament and leading figures in industry and commerce, because it is almost impossible to draw a clear line between the public and private lives of such people. It can be argued that the moral values that drive the private lives of such people are relevant to their public deeds. That being so, we will never be prepared to inhibit legitimate investigation of the lives of the rich and powerful. Several hon. Members have made that clear. Apart from specific legislation to deal with bugging, telephoto lenses and the like, we are not in favour of restrictive privacy laws.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): I appreciate the difficulties of definition in relation to public interest and the private lives of public figures. The hon. Lady raises real and serious problems, and I should like to draw her attention to two matters. As a consequence of the adjudication in *New York Times v.* Sullivan in America in, I think, 1962 and subsequent case law, a sort of sliding scale has evolved. That means that there is less protection for the private life of the public figure than for the private life of an ordinary citizen. It is impossible to define satisfactorily in general terms the public interest, but over about the past 30 years, judges have been able to find practical ways to deal with the problem. Equally, defamation is not defined in the Defamation Act 1952, but the understanding of defamation in our law has been achieved cumulatively through adjudications and a growing body of jurisprudence since that date.

Mrs. Clwyd: I am certainly aware of the situation in the United States. When I reach that issue, I shall give the hon. Gentleman some information about the situation in the rest of Europe, which is also worth noting. The privacy laws in those European countries that have them go hand in hand with rights of freedom for the press enshrined in law. Of course, such rights are not enshrined in United Kingdom law. One of my main reasons for opposing a privacy law is that it should not be introduced until rights for the press are enshrined in some way in our law.

I should like to refer to an article by an experienced newspaper editor who has certainly interested Opposition Members and, I am sure, the Government in the past few weeks. He is William Rees-Mogg, the former editor of *The Times*, and his article makes an interesting point about controlling the recording of private conversations. He says:

"there is a strong case for making electronic eavesdropping a criminal offence, where it is not so already. All citizens are entitled to the privacy of their conversations unless they are

engaged in crime, just as they should be protected against the invasion of their privacy by intrusive photographers with telephoto lenses.

Most bugging is indeed already illegal, yet a clearer law which made prosecution easier would be desirable. But who would be most likely to fall foul of such a law? Who does most of the bugging in Britain? Undoubtedly it is the state. Newspapers, as in the David Mellor case, have occasionally used improperly obtained transcripts of telephone conversations which have been taped by private enterprise. But the state intercepts communications on an industrial scale, and has been doing so since the second world war and earlier."

He concludes:

"We should hope, therefore, that the protection which British citizens ought to have against intrusion and espionage, by whatever means, will cover intrusions into privacy by the state, from which there is much to fear, as well as by paparazzi and tabloid journalists."

We would do well to remind ourselves of that throughout the debate.

Although we accept that both Sir David Calcutt and the Select Committee were working to a specific remit, the Government have the opportunity to view the argument about press freedom and press regulation within a broader context. It is absurd for the Government to claim that issues of press ownership are unrelated to the debate about press freedom. A pluralistic press and media are fundamental to the notion of a free and democratic society.

The past 14 years have witnessed a further increase in the concentration of press ownership. When one individual, Rupert Murdoch, can own 35 per cent. of all weekday newspaper circulation, that is, in the eyes of most people, a quite unacceptable concentration of power. There is surely no more insidious monopoly than a monopoly of opinion. We should all be concerned that Rupert Murdoch acolytes now have the temerity to argue that their boss should be allowed to take over vast tracts of British television.

Such people have no respect for democracy. They say that they want a pluralistic society, but they act in such a manner as to suggest the opposite. For them, the monopolistic control of the media is a means of achieving political power, denying the diversity of express which is essential to a free society.

When I put it to the Secretary of State during National Heritage questions on 22 February that the existing concentration of press ownership was unacceptable, he said:

"we keep these matters under review and I do not believe that the adjective 'unacceptable' can be justified at this time."—[*Official Report*, 22 February 1993; Vol. 219, c. 668.]

If not at this time, perhaps the Secretary of State will tell us when he believes that adjective can be used and when it will be necessary to take action.

Despite recent attacks on the Government—there have been many of those in the past few days and weeks—no one should be under any illusion about the ultimate loyalty of large sections of the press. At the run-up to the next election, they will run like well-trained sheep back into the fold of the Conservative party.

Clearly, the Government will never take action to reduce the overweening power of a small number of press barons. A future Labour Government will immediately refer the whole matter of ownership and cross-ownership to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. We will look for ways of bringing more diversity to local, regional and national newspapers.

We agree with the Select Committee that greater freedom of information is an essential component of any action to regulate the press. We are totally committed to a freedom of information Act. We note that the Government oppose the Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher). Clearly a Government who are desperate to suppress the truth on such matters as the sale of arms to various fascist dictators around the world, the Matrix Churchill supergun affair, the real level of unemployment and the true state of public finances will be opposed to a freedom of information Act. Those who have a contempt for democracy will for ever seek to limit the spread of information and understanding.

It is essential to appreciate the context of much contemporary journalism. Journalists are put under great pressure by predominantly right-wing editors and proprietors to produce particular types of stories. Principled journalists who resist are frequently bypassed for promotion; ambitious journalists accept it as a distasteful fact of life. We agree with the Select Committee that much more emphasis should be given to the promotion of journalistic ethics and that owners and proprietors should carry the can for stories that their staff are frequently bullied into writing.

As part of its investigation, the Select Committee went to the United States to consider the experience there. As I said earlier, it is worth while in such a debate to consider how the press operates in other European countries. In a recently published report by the organisation Article 19, the International Centre against Censorship, Britain was found to have the weakest press freedom and the most over-regulated press of the 11 countries studied. Britain is the only country in the Council of Europe that has not entrenched the right to freedom of expression in its laws, either through inclusion in a constitution or by incorporating article 10 of the European convention.

We have long recognised the basic truism that there cannot be a free society without a free press. The Labour party has a long and honourable record of defending and promoting press freedom. The Government can claim no such record. In the past 14 years, they have not only underwritten an increasing concentration of press ownership but acted more directly to restrain freedom of expression.

In 1985, the Government attempted to ban the showing of "Real Lives". In 1987, they attempted to ban the Secret Society programme about Zircon. In 1988, they attempted to stop the showing of "Death on the Rock" and imposed a broadcasting ban on a number of organisations in Northern Ireland. They also sought to ban the publication of Peter Wright's book "Spycatcher" through the use of injunctions on British newspapers.

We have one of the most secretive and authoritarian Governments this century. It is outrageous for them to claim that they are the guardians of press freedom. Against that background and in the light of Labour's total commitment to a free and flourishing press, we will bring forward our legislation on press and television when we return to office, which may be sooner rather than later.

6.6 pm

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): The whole House ought to act as guardians of press freedom. Until the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) spoke, there was complete unanimity in the House, just as there was

[Mr. Toby Jessel]

complete unanimity in the Select Committee on National Heritage in the preparation of its report under the chairmanship of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman).

It is a pity that the hon. Lady strayed from the bipartisan approach that has characterised the debate. I am the first to understand that her party expects her to make an attacking speech. I hope she will forgive me if I am not drawn into retaliating in the same spirit, although I shall come back a little later to what she said.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The hon. Gentleman speaks of the absolute unanimity in the House this afternoon reflecting the absolute unanimity of the Select Committee. The only people who have spoken in the House this afternoon other than the hon. Lady were members of the Select Committee, so it should not be taken that that reflects the opinion of the entire House.

Mr. Jessel: It might be premature to say that the House is absolutely unanimous, but I was not saying that, because plainly the hon. Lady was not in agreement; but the Select Committee considered different options in very great depth before reaching a unanimous conclusion.

The report has been carefully written after intensive work. It was a job assigned to the Select Committee by the House, so the House owes it to the Select Committee to study its report with an open mind and with great care before dissenting from it. I hope that the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), whom I have known for many years, will do that.

I regard it as a tremendous privilege to serve on the Select Committee, which is one of the finest Select Committees of the House. Following the report that we have produced, and for the reasons that have been set out by several right hon. and hon. Members during the debate, we cannot let things stay as they are.

I am grateful to the Secretary of State for National Heritage for being present to listen to the debate. I hope and believe that he will carefully consider not only the views of the Committee as expressed in the report, but the opinions put in this debate and that, before long, he will take a view on what is needed and lay proposals before the House.

The House has a duty to protect the weak against the strong. As the report says in paragraph 5:

"The Committee's concern . . . has been mainly with the ordinary citizen who in the normal course of his or her life will never come into contact with the broadcast or written media, except as viewer, listener or reader; but who suddenly becomes of interest to the media, due often to circumstances beyond his or her control, such as becoming a crime victim or being related to the victim of a crime or terrorist act. Such people, as a result of injudicious, thoughtless or malicious reporting, can suffer additional distress at what is already a time of trauma and shock . . . The Committee does not believe that anyone has the right to inflict such harm on innocent persons."

I make no apology to the House for alluding again to the case of two widows of soldiers who were murdered in Northern Ireland. I should like to quote from the evidence given by those two widows to the Select Committee.

"There was one particular reporter . . . who persisted in coming to my sister's house with cameras . . . we had about three or four phoning up at all times of the day or night. My husband's sister"—

that is, the sister of her husband who had just been murdered by the IRA—

"was heavily pregnant, about 8 months pregnant at the time, and she was living on her own, and two men at 11.00 at night knocked on her door. She asked who they were and they said that they were friends of my husband. So naturally she opened the door and let them in. Once they were in the flat they told her they were press . . . She had just lost her eldest brother and she was very traumatised through that."

My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, North (Mr. Gorst) then asked:

"Did the press ever try to represent to you that you had a duty?"

The widow said:

"Yes. The onus was put on us that if we did not tell the British public exactly what was going on, then we were very negligent. It was our duty to inform the public exactly what happened, so that they got the story straight."

She went on to say:

"At the time you do not have much of a choice. You are in a daze anyway. You go on to automatic pilot and just say go away and put what you want to say. It is at a time when you are not fully aware of what you are doing . . . It takes about 12 months before you are actually aware of things that are happening around you. Obviously I did it three days after my husband died and you are just numb."

My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, North then asked her:

"How long did this intrusion persist for? Was it days or weeks?"

She replied:

"Intensely, about three or four weeks . . . then it sort of petered out."

She went on to say that the journalists were:

"poking cameras through the front room window . . . I do believe to a degree they have to report what happened, but poking their cameras through your front room window at a time when you are at your lowest ebb, the most traumatic time for me in my life, then that is an invasion of privacy . . . If you want to be in your own house with your family at a time when you are grieving, then it is your own private time . . . I was advised by the Army that if I did not do it, we would just get even more harassment. So I did it when they wanted me to. They got the photographs they wanted and I thought that would be it, but they persisted and persisted. I had them climbing trees at the graveside to get better pictures . . . You should be given a chance to say 'No, I do not want to do this interview. I do not want to talk about it. Please leave me along,' but you are put under intolerable pressure by the fact that if you do say no you know they are going to keep coming back and back and in the end you give in simply for a quiet life."

That is completely unacceptable. Twenty years or so ago, the House decided to stop harassment of tenants by landlords such as Rachman. It is now time that the House acted to stop the harassment of people who are in terrible trauma from the great shock of a sudden bereavement due to, say, a terrorist act, or to their daughter being raped, or some other great trauma. Those people must be protected, too. I hope that we will not delay that action for too long. It is quite wrong that it should be allowed to continue and quite wrong that anyone should seem complacent about it.

The hon. Member for Cynon Valley questioned the commission's proposals for an ombudsman or for fines, but the Select Committee, having been round and round the subject, took the view that if there were no teeth, nothing would happen. Under what we propose, there is ample protection for members of the press who act properly and fairly.

As the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) explained with such force, it is quite normal in other professions for professional bodies to be able to fine. It ought to be possible for the press commission to do so in

cases of that kind. If such fines are not possible, the commission should be able to refer the case to a press ombudsman, as the Lord Chancellor suggested when he gave evidence to the Select Committee. The ombudsman could then endorse the fine proposed by the press commission and, if the newspaper concerned refused to pay the fine, it would be open to the ombudsman to apply to a court of law for the fine to be sanctioned.

There is a need to alter the framework and redress the balance. It is not enough just to say that there should be a code of conduct for journalists. We proposed that, and it has some value and some uses. However, picture a journalist with a wife and children to support, anxious to make his way in his profession, under pressure from his editor to produce a newsworthy story. The editor has the sanction of that journalist's promotion and the journalist's job might even be at stake if he does not do well enough. The editor is in turn under pressure from the proprietor to boost circulation and to improve the profit of that newspaper. So all those pressures are on a journalist to get a sensational story and to trespass on the privacy of an individual to an unreasonable degree in order to do so.

Unless the framework is changed in the way proposed by the Select Committee, I cannot see how we will be able to protect people such as those two widows. I hope that the House will take the matter seriously and impartially, and will try to achieve a degree of unanimity in the belief that something needs to be done. If the House does not act in the near future, I do not think that the public will be likely to forgive or forget our failure.

6.18 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I agree with the hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) that there is a need for something to be done. However, I do not accept any implication that all 43 recommendations of the Select Committee either reflect the consensus of the House or are necessarily the best way in which to proceed. Having said that, I pay warm tribute to the Select Committee for a thorough piece of work. It clearly took a great deal of evidence, reflected on it carefully and approached the matter with a non-partisan spirit. Therefore, its recommendations carry weight, as the hon. Gentleman suggests, and that should be recognised by other hon. Members.

However, I am odds with at least one over-arching and core recommendation as the ultimate sanction—the establishment of a statutory ombudsman to provide back-up to the other methods recommended for self-regulation of the press. Because of that rather fundamental disagreement, I want to focus more on what I disagree with than on what I agree with.

I acknowledge, welcome and congratulate the members of the Select Committee, especially the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), on having already achieved a number of reforms. I do not think it an accident that the composition of the Press Complaints Commission has been changed or that a helpline has been established. Those important steps are a direct consequence of the quite proper pressure put on the press by the House, through its Select Committee.

Almost every hon. Member who has spoken has felt it necessary to put his hand on his heart and say that, notwithstanding the proposals in the report, he is firmly committed to the freedom of the press. That is scarcely a surprising asseveration to make in the House, but it needs to be made. Any deliberate steps taken in law to abridge that freedom would be very serious—and there are proposals in the report that would abridge that freedom.

Much has been made of the example set in the United States of America, yet it is a cornerstone of its approach to the problem that the first amendment to its constitution provides that Congress should not abridge the freedom of speech or the freedom of the press. That fundamental law, which is entrenched in the constitution, is the background against which we must judge the steps that have been taken —both through the development of the jurisprudence of the courts and the development of state legislation on privacy—if we are to understand where the priorities lie in the United States. I believe that they should lie here, as they do there, firmly on the side of the freedom of the press.

The hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) spoke of her similar conclusion and said that other European countries had secured that commitment to the freedom of the press by entrenching in their domestic laws a safeguard such as that contained in article 10 of the European convention on human rights. I very much welcome the view expressed by the Labour Front Bench, because it is not so very long ago that it opposed the incorporation of the European convention in all its aspects.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) appears to be an unreconstructed opponent of incorporation and, therefore, the securing of the protection of the freedom of the press and, incidentally, due entrenchment of the rights of privacy. Although article 10 secures the freedom of the press, article 8 guarantees protection of the privacy of the family and the individual. It is that sort of balanced approach that the House and the Government must take on the issues that have given rise to this debate and to the need for legislation.

It is true that, over recent months, parts of the popular press have offended many people by the stories that they have published. The means that they have employed to get the stories and the intrusions of privacy that they have committed have in some cases shown an almost total absence of self-restraint in pursuance of higher circulation figures at all costs. However, the behaviour of some newspapers has led to the suspicion that it has been deliberately designed to test how far the press can go and its power in conflict with existing political structures and the establishment.

Some newspapers have gone so far as to say that they are prepared to test the law itself. I am thinking of *The Sun*, which this week flouted the law with the disclosure of the identity of a person under the age of 16 involved in an attempted rape case. That newspaper quite boldly set out what it was doing. The law covers that behaviour and no doubt the law will take its course. I do not underrate the extent to which the press, or certain sections of it, is testing the resolve of Parliament and the limits of the law.

So far, the Government's response has been restrained. The two reports by Sir David Calcutt certainly were not rushed. Neither have the Government been speedy in concluding what, if any, changes in the law are required. I commend the Secretary of State for that, because the problem is difficult—how to prevent such excesses without limiting the freedom of speech; how to uphold the freedom of expression while providing protection for victims of

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unjustifiable intrusion of privacy; and how to achieve a balance between the need to know and the need to protect individuals from unwarranted and cruel exposure of the sort referred to by the hon. Member for Twickenham.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I have listened to the hon. Gentleman with great interest and, indeed, great sympathy. He referred to unjustifiable intrusion into people's privacy. What does he regard as justifiable intrusion, if there is such a thing? He stated his view—it is one which I share and which I shall touch on if I catch your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speaker—on how the press appears to be setting itself up in judgment on almost everything, at any time.

The hon. Gentleman referred to personal attacks. I do not want to be party political, but does he feel that the personal attacks made on my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the former Chancellor of the Exchequer—and, indeed, at one stage the leader of the hon. Gentleman's party and the Leader of the Opposition—were justified?

Mr. Maclennan: It is easier to say what is unjustified than what is justified——

Mr. Jessel: Answer the question.

Mr. Maclennan: My whole speech is an attempt to deal with the question. I hope that I can satisfy the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale). Painful though some of the intrusions into privacy may be, it is open to question whether they have seriously damaged the victims of them. The censorious attitude often displayed towards public figures is not necessarily shared by the public. There have been a number of occasions recently when the press has been remarkably out of line with public thinking.

As I have said, the protection of the freedom of expression must be the cornerstone of any policy concerning the media, print or broadcast. The Calcutt report was too cautious when it addressed the current legal protection of freedom of expression. The common law does not adequately afford sufficient protection; nor are judges able adequately to take account of the provisions of the European convention on human rights.

I draw attention again to the view in the higher ranks of the judiciary—it must be recognised that it is a changing view—that the time has come to incorporate the European convention. Sir Thomas Bingham, the Master of the Rolls, expressed that view in his address to the Bar Council last autumn. The Lord Chief Justice, Lord Taylor, has expressed the same view.

As I have said, the incorporation of that convention would import a law of privacy into this country and at the same time import a secure bulwark against the erosion of the freedom of the press. Perhaps it would enable a jurisprudence to develop which answered the kind of question just posed to me across the Chamber about where the boundary should be drawn.

It is probably easier for the courts to determine what is justifiable in the public interest than it is for us in the House to seek to legislate in advance to describe the precise circumstances where the public interest should be protected. In that area, I favour broad categories of definition rather than attempting a Bill, running into many clauses and subsections, to answer the sort of question raised by the hon. Member for Thanet, North. I do not believe that we as legislators can foresee the circumstances in which we would wish to intervene to curb the freedom of expression because it is an unjustified invasion of privacy.

I also think that the law should be reformed in the context of a proper examination of the whole area of information law. The assorted laws that we have in that area are in a pretty lamentable state. We have piecemeal legislation dealing with the protection of journalists' sources which is not based on a coherent or principled approach to information law. Such a review should include defamation and contempt of court, blasphemy and incitement to racial hatred, to name but a few of the matters requiring consideration.

A number of measures—this is the burden of the Select Committee's report—fall to be considered as a matter of urgency to deal with the question of intrusion and how far the rights of the press in that matter should be curbed, and how we should seek in so doing to avoid hindering the legitimate investigative role of the press.

The Select Committee identified a number of changes to the law on intrusion which mirrored the views of the Calcutt committee. It recommended that three forms of physical intrusion should be criminal offences in England and Wales—entering private property, placing a surveillance device on private property and taking a photograph or recording a voice of an individual on private property without the consent of the lawful occupant and with intent to obtain personal information with a view to its publication.

The Government accepted those proposals in principle some time ago. The Secretary of State may have something to say about where the Government stand now on those matters. I would not wish to see legislation give effect to those recommendations in the absence of some further legislative underpinning of the freedom of the press of the kind that I have mentioned. If they are practicable, those are sensible recommendations, but they are acceptable only if the general protection is provided.

Having said that, I come to the question of self-regulation and how it can be made more effective. The Select Committee proposed the ultimate sanction of a press ombudsman, established by statute, following the recommendation of the Lord Chancellor—I am not sure that it was exactly his recommendation, but he described how it might be done.

The burden of the Select Committee's report in this matter was to suggest a strengthening of self-regulation. I am wholly at one with the findings of the Select Committee. It must be right to seek to establish an effective code and system of enforcement which not only editors but proprietors are anxious to see work. Without the participation of the proprietors, the best efforts of the editors may be set at naught. For that reason, I should like to see those representatives of the proprietors who can speak with authority about their views directly represented on the new press commission.

I have struggled long and hard to think how self-regulation could be more effective than it has so far proved to be. The Select Committee made a number of valuable suggestions, some of which have already been taken up, but, in this respect, the Committee has not gone far enough. It would be possible to give teeth to the self-regulatory proposals without establishing a statutory ombudsman or commission.

The commission could extract from the proprietors of the press the payment of a bond, to be deposited each year with the commission, the amount of which would be related to the circulation of the newspapers in question. At the end of the year, the bond would be repayable with interest. In a sense, it would be a bond for good behaviour. I do not believe that that should be done by statute. The press and publishers say they want to make the self-regulatory scheme work. Let them show that they want to make it work.

Mr. Gorst: The trouble that we had in the Select Committee was that any such suggestion might well be almost universally acceptable to the press, but not quite. We had to consider the worst case situation in which, for example, a tabloid newspaper editor said that he had no respect for the judiciary or Members of Parliament, but, above all, no respect for his fellow editors. In the face of that, what is to be done if a newspaper, with a circulation of some 3 million a day, says, "Take your bond and put it where the monkey puts his nuts"?

Mr. Maclennan: Then we may have to come back to the issue that was faced by the Committee and look at the alternatives——

Mr. Jessel: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maclennan: No, I must answer one intervention at a time.

The achievement of that would be to isolate the villains. Not many proprietors or editors——

Mr. Gorst: One is enough.

Mr. Maclennan: No, it is not enough. Many proprietors or editors would regard it as hostile to their interests to be seen by their readership to be prepared to stand back wholly from the standards agreed by the rest of the press; to be proclaimed as the sole newspaper to have no willingness to seek to regulate itself effectively. Given the importance of press freedom, I, at least, am prepared to give that a try. Such a step should be taken before any state intervention to extract fines—and there should be no doubt that that is the purpose of the state-appointed ombudsman.

The Committee has drawn our attention to the existence of other state-appointed—or, at least, state-nominated—ombudsmen; but I do not believe that they are in pari materia, if I may use the legal jargon.

Mr. Gorst: Why is a grievance felt by someone who approaches an insurance ombudsman—or any other ombudsman—less important than a grievance felt by an ordinary individual as a result of his treatment by the press? A grievance is a grievance, whoever causes it. Why should not that individual be compensated?

Mr. Maclennan: There are two differences between the position of the press and the position of other bodies to which the ultimate sanction is available. First, in all the other four instances mentioned in the appendix, it may prove difficult to establish the facts. If the grievance involved is to be dealt with satisfactorily, it may be necessary to consider what actually happened very carefully.

No doubt the hon. Member for Hendon, North (Mr. Gorst), along with many others, will have encountered difficult legal and insurance questions in his surgeries. In my experience, local government ombudsmen must go into considerable detail to discover what has happened before recommending an appropriate remedy. The same applies to the administration of the health service and pensions.

Secondly, in most cases involving the public interest —or the private interest, in terms of the invasion of privacy—there is little to be investigated. The facts are clear: they stare us in the face. The investigative process available to an ombudsman is not necessary to establish the truth; whether what has been done was in the public interest is a matter of judgment. I do not consider it appropriate for that judgment to be made by a state-appointed official, and on that important issue of principle I differ from the Select Committee.

Having said that, I acknowledge the growing sense of public concern about intrusion. I also accept that the vast bulk of the Select Committee's recommendations make a good deal of sense: the Committee's work has highlighted areas in which the press can put its house in order to protect the public from unlicensed intrusions that are unacceptable in a civilised society. If the Government are prepared to entrench the freedom of the press as a fundamental right in our law, I will go much further towards seeking to entrench a right of privacy in the manner recommended by the Committee. Rights must be balanced: in this instance, they must be balanced through the securing of an international obligation in our domestic law.

6.44 pm

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): Let me associate myself with the tributes paid to the Chairman of the Select Committee, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), by my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) and my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn). The right hon. Gentleman introduced our report with authority, and his chairmanship of the Committee has been characterised by intellectual quality, civility, humour and the arts of management.

How are we to strike an appropriate balance between press freedom and the rights of the individual, especially in regard to privacy? We seek to balance the desirability of a free flow of information and opinion with the desirability of protecting vulnerable people from the invasion of their privacy, unfair and inaccurate representation, bullying, harassment and the abuse of press power. The Select Committee examined privacy in that broad context, and we have sought to base our recommendations on the principles that should apply.

I believe that every member of the Committee is deeply reluctant to see the press trammelled. We should remember, however, that the development and history of Parliament is classically about enhancing, and making effective, the rights of the ordinary citizen in the face of the abuse of power, whether the abuse has been perpetrated by would-be absolute monarchs, insensitive latter-day big Government, factory owners, landlords, the robber barons of the middle ages or the trade union, local government and press barons of the 20th century. We cannot neglect that responsibility.

Of course, a free press is itself an essential part of the protection of the citizen. That is why our report proposes an enhancement of the rights of the press—and, therefore, the rights of the public—to have access to information. We

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dealt with the subject briefly. It is a huge subject which warrants a whole report of its own, and in any event Parliament is already dealing with it in considering the Right to Know Bill presented by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher).

I welcome the serious consideration that the Government are devoting to the issue: we look forward to seeing the first fruits of their thinking before very long. In a mature democracy, a Government entrusted by the people with the task of acting on their behalf will treat the people with respect; a Government who do not trust the people—who patronise them—will discourage responsible attitudes in public life.

If the press is systematically excluded from knowledge of the factors that go into Government decision making, the quality of public debate is liable to suffer. Government secrecy tends to make serious, responsible debate more difficult in our democracy. In the absence of information, gossip rules. Even the quality press is driven increasingly to speculate, to dwell on the marginal and the trivial and to personalise. Governments can then hardly complain when the press does not report fairly and constructively the policy issues to which they must address themselves.

While the press should always be disposed to scepticism in relation to Governments, it should not be cynical. However, if it is systematically denied information while at the same time being manipulated by unattributable briefings and guided by politicians and those who assist them, how can the press be objective, authoritative, fair and magnanimous, as we would prefer it to be?

The improved debate that would result from freedom of information would assist Ministers: they would have more opportunities to check official advice, and more alternative advice would be available to them. They would have more chances to pre-test options at the bar of independent expertise and the bar of public opinion.

No member of the Select Committee has any illusions that there would be a damascene conversion on the part of the press in the event of the introduction of freedom of information legislation. There are other factors and temptations that may lead the press towards trivialisation, bias and taking risks with the truth. I hasten to add that the press does not universally succumb. Much of our press, for most of the time, is responsible and of high quality. But more freedom of information would lead to better possibilities for debate and decision making within our polity.

Freedom of information would enhance the status of the press. In the absence of a first amendment and of the incorporation of the European convention on human rights into our domestic law—there are powerful reasons why the convention should not be so incorporated—freedom of information would give the press a higher status and enhance its sense of responsibility. In time, the culture would improve.

We would need to fortify that process through the education of the public and of journalists. I attach importance to the recommendation in paragraph 70 of our report that the press commission should exercise some supervisory responsibility over the training of journalists, particularly in ethics. I should like to see more and better schools of journalism in this country. We do not have any equivalent, for example, to the Columbia school of journalism. It is worth reflecting on what more could be done about that, and I hope that the Higher Education Funding Council will address itself to it.

I am glad that the teaching of media studies is increasing in our schools and that the national curriculum promotes it. Above all, those who are educated in our schools, colleges and universities need to study good literature and criticism. It is perhaps even more important today than ever that education should help to develop a common readership within our democracy, readers who are capable of distinguishing the phoney from the genuine, sloganising from reasoning, assertion from debate, propaganda from truth and rubbish from quality. We need to equip our citizens for our democracy so that they are able to exercise the appropriate discrimination when they confront the utterances of journalists and politicians.

Our recommendation that freedom of information should be increased is fundamental in our report and is of enormous potential importance to our press and the quality of our democracy.

We have also sought to balance any proposed new rights for our citizens with rights for the press. In particular, we have proposed that there should be a public interest defence that the press could plead in the event of being challenged under the legal changes that we have envisaged. Definition of the public interest is a difficult task, and I believe that it is best achieved through an accumulation of adjudication and a growing body of jurisprudence, on the part of the voluntary regulators of the press as well as the ombudsman and the courts.

One of the reasons why there has been dissatisfaction among those of us who have looked at the performance of the Press Complaints Commission is that its record on developing a body of jurisprudence has been so flimsy.

Mr. Jessel: My hon. Friend referred to the difficulty of defining the public interest. Does not that become much easier when one realises that the words "public interest" are ambiguous in that they can mean either interesting to the public or to the public's benefit? When one has decided which is which, there is relatively little problem about definition.

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. That is an important distinction which is too often ignored by members of the press.

Parliament and the press should be allies. We share an indispensable role and duty to scrutinise the Government of the day through questions, debates and commentaries. It is the job of both Parliament and the press to seek to restrain misjudgment on the part of Governments and to restrain the abuse of power. It is equally the responsibility of Parliament and the press to patrol and prevent the abuse of power elsewhere in our society.

That presents a dilemma for Parliament in its dealings with the press. A free and powerful press is a pillar of our democracy, but from time to time, because it is powerful and human, the press abuses its power. Parliament needs to satisfy itself that the scope for such abuse is curtailed to an extent consistent with the press being able to play its proper part in our policy. Parliament must also provide remedies for the aggrieved citizen—the victim of the abuse of press power.

The worst of such abuse is inaccuracy. The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) has been absolutely right to concentrate his attention in his Bill on

the evil of inaccuracy by the press. As I explained during my speech on Second Reading of his Bill, I disagree with some of the methods that he has proposed, but I applaud his essential purposes.

Another abuse is the invasion of privacy. That was the Select Committee's starting point in its consideration of the issue of the freedom and responsibility of the press. Let us be in no doubt that there is a problem. Hon. Members who have contributed to the debate have spoken eloquently about the horrible experiences at the hands of the press of the widows of soldiers murdered by the IRA and of a victim of rape who gave evidence to the Select Committee. We also need to take immensely seriously the written evidence submitted to the Committee by Victim Support. I welcome, by the way, the extension of its network of counselling. I hope that in time Victim Support in this country will be able to achieve an extensive network of counselling, advocacy and assistance in relation to the press in support of victims of crisis as well as crime, on the same pattern as the National Organisation for Victim Assistance in the United States.

In the case studies presented to us by Victim Support, the father of a murder victim is quoted as saying:

"They are trespassing on our grief."

The case studies are vivid, poignant and shocking and they represent unacceptable journalistic practice. How often can there be a true public interest in detailed reporting of personal unhappiness?

I accept that cases of abuse are not numerous and that the code of practice has gone a long way towards defining proper standards and, even now, is being further strengthened. I accept that most journalists act with restraint and responsibility and that many of them deal with sensitive and difficult matters admirably. I accept that most of the press is seriously determined to root out the abuse that exists. I acknowledge that coverage of tragedies can be therapeutic for those who have suffered from them, and it can be therapeutic for our society if such horrors are exposed and public shock, anger and grief can be expressed.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): One of the problems is that the existing code of practice is contradictory. It talks about intrusions into private life and makes the public interest exceptions. However, instead of the original recommendation that that should not be done, paragraph 10—

"Intrusion into grief or shock"—

admits that intrusion can take place and says simply that approaches should be

"made with sympathy and discretion."

Does not that start by getting the press into trouble?

Mr. Howarth: The sentiment in paragraph 9 of the Press Complaints Commission's code of practice on intrusion into grief or shock is admirable. However, the hon. Gentleman is right to observe that the code of practice promulgated by the Press Complaints Commission was, in important respects, a dilution of the code of practice originally recommended by the Calcutt committee on privacy and related matters. He will have noted the comparative texts of alternative codes given in the Select Committee's report. I am pleased that there is some recognition in the industry that the code needs strengthening and that, where there are confusions, they should be ironed out.

Abuses have occurred, even since the code was promulgated. The problem is that some members of the press are shameless and will observe no standards of civility. It is inescapable, therefore, that Parliament has a duty to strengthen the protection afforded to the citizen. I regret that the industry has reacted so negatively to our proposals. I have been worried that the Press Complaints Commission and editors have been remarkably complacement about the extent of the abuses. They have tried to rest their case on the paucity of complaints to the PCC, which is a disingenuous argument and one with which we cannot be satisfied. There was a very disturbing complacency in the evidence given by the PCC to the Calcutt review.

The Committee has approached the issue in two ways. We recommend that the law—civil and criminal—be strengthened to provide new statutory rights to privacy. It is preferable that there should be civil remedies in this field. I also believe that it is preferable that the law should be of general application and not bite discriminatingly or exclusively on the press. That part of the Calcutt review which sets out a number of recommendations for new criminal offences and qualifies each with the notion that they should be offences only when the activity had been carried out with a view to publication was surprising and unsatisfactory.

Abuses by the press need to be seen as a sub-set of wider problems. For example, harassment is perpetrated not only by reporters and photographers. There are other types of harassment such as sexual harassment, noise harassment and spying. It is therefore right that paragraph 48 of our report recommends that the tort of infringement of privacy should cover

"violating the peace of another by intruding upon him, or persistently communicating with him."

We had in mind not only abuse by journalists.

The British people value privacy. We have a tradition whereby an Englishman's home is his castle. Privacy has always been important to us, but it is becoming even more important and more difficult to secure because of changing technology. Some aspects of the legal protection of privacy need to be enshrined in the criminal law. I am pleased that there has been little or no demur that bugging, the use of long-range photography and a number of activities made possible by relatively recent technology should be criminal offences. It is good, too, that the code is being modified to take account of such matters.

I am sure it is also right that there should be a criminal offence of harassment. A person who is bullied and besieged, in the aftermath of a traumatic shock, may not be in a position to take action on his or her own behalf or even to identify his or her assailant. The police should have the power to intervene directly to prevent such harassment.

It is essential that legal aid should be available to enable people of modest means to avail themselves of the remedies provided in law. There should be legal aid for privacy and libel actions. Of course, I appreciate that the cost of legal aid has been rising. The Lord Chancellor estimates that, in 1994-95, public expenditure on legal aid will be £1·4 billion. That is indeed a great deal of money, and the Lord Chancellor is right to seek to reduce the cost of legal process. However, our society is founded on the rule of law. We must protect the weakest. It is not acceptable that there should be one law available for the

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rich and another, or none, for the poor. Taxpayers must pay what it costs to preserve freedoms under the law which were intended to be provided for all citizens.

The press has always had to operate within a framework of law—laws relating to defamation, data protection, obscenity, contempt of court and confidence, to name but some. There is therefore no new principle involved in our argument that the press should be subject to a new law of privacy. The press itself is quick to claim the protection of the law and our traditional constitutional liberties, so it should also be willing to abide by the law and respect the legal constraints which protect and bind all of us.

The third strand in our recommendations is the strengthening of voluntary regulation. I am sure that all of us believe that it is preferable to achieve effective regulation on a voluntary basis. Is it naive to hope that we can do so? Sir David Calcutt concluded that it was naive to hope so by this stage. He believed that the bluff had at long last to be called.

We do indeed face the problem that, in the 40 or so years since the foundation of the Press Council, the industry has invariably done too little too late to put its own house in order. It is only about two years ago that it adopted a code of practice. Journalists have known that Parliament is reluctant to legislate to limit their freedoms and, in some cases, they have exploited our reluctance, which was in the interests of the preservation of a free society.

I do not share Sir David's conclusion. The PCC has been a weak vessel and some of the press are unrepentant, but I believe that the resources of voluntary regulation are not exhausted. I am encouraged, as other hon. Members have been, by the fact that since our report was published the code has been strengthened. Membership of the PCC and the appointments commission has been modified. Steps have been taken to introduce a helpline. Some newspapers are introducing readers' representatives who have real independence. The industry is moving towards the adoption of contracts of employment which would require journalists to observe the code. Steps are also being taken to prevent jigsaw identification of crime victims.

I do not believe that there would have been such movement had the industry not felt the hot breath of regulation on its neck. The industry still needs to move further. Editors and proprietors have other issues to consider. There should be redress for grievances, and the industry should agree that the PCC should have the power to fine and require payment of compensation. Serious arguments were put to the Select Committee against such ideas. Although I respect those arguments, I do not find them persuasive.

The press wants to avoid a tribunal on the model recommended by Calcutt. It wants to keep out of the courts. But, at the same time, members of the public with justified grievances must be entitled to compensation, and scandalous offences should be disciplined under a system of voluntary regulation. The commission should have those powers.

There have been vociferous and even hysterical reactions by the press to our recommendations. A leader in *The Independent* said that the proposals would amount to censorship. The *Daily Mail* talked of "fetters", and Ms Patsy Chapman, the editor of the *News of the World* but enjoying the hospitality of the columns of *The Times*, wrote of "Kaufman's kangaroo court". The most extreme was Mr. Andrew Neil, the editor of *The Sunday Times*. He was quoted as saying that the Committee's recommendations would involve a degree of intrusion into the freedom of the press

"greater than anything that existed under Nazi Germany."

Particular criticisms were vented against our recommendation that there should be an ombudsman. The more I read the press coverage of our report, the more I was persuaded that there was a very strong case for the institution of an ombudsman. The report states that we envisage the ombudsman as a "bulwark" to support voluntary regulation. The history of the Press Council and the Press Complaints Commission has been disappointing, and I believe that the successor body will need the reinforcement that an ombudsman would provide.

It is not such a terrible idea to contemplate. Since the 1960s, ombudsmen have been successfully introduced into various fields of our national life. Each field is different and, of course, the press is unique. However, it is fair to observe that it is no less important that the legal profession and legal services should be independent of politics and Government than it is that the press should be. The legal services ombudsman, statutorily created, has proved of benefit to the profession and the public.

The press ombudsman, as we envisage him, would be invoked by way of appeal by dissatisfied plaintiffs—those dissatisfied by the remedy offered them by the press commission—or by the press, being itself dissatisfied with a judgment of the press commission. The knowledge that such a recourse, a right of appeal, existed would usefully challenge the press commission to make a success of its task. As we say in the report, the best test of the success of voluntary regulation by the press commission would be that the ombudsman's role would be virtually non-existent.

Two main criticisms have been made of our recommendation of the institution of an ombudsman. There has been objection to our suggestion that he should be appointed by the Lord Chancellor. The Select Committee found it a delicate issue to decide how the ombudsman should be appointed. The case for the Lord Chancellor making the appointment is that he is a respected authority who would make the appointment in a non-political capacity. The industry is not justified in its fear that, because he was appointed by the Lord Chancellor, the ombudsman would somehow be the Government's nark.

The second question that has raised difficulties concerns the powers that the ombudsman should exercise and the basis of those powers. Other ombudsmen proceed on the basis of moral authority and suasion, whereas the press ombudsman's powers—for example, to insist on corrections, apologies, the publication of names to institutionalise shame, and to require compensation and the payment of fines—would be created by statute. But it is important to note that in our recommendations we have not suggested that the ombudsman should have independent powers of enforcement.

In the event that a ruling by the ombudsman was not observed by a newspaper, it would be necessary to apply to the High Court for remedy of the grievance. Equally, if a newspaper did not accept a ruling of the ombudsman, the newspaper could apply to the court for the discharge

of that ruling. So our recommendations embody the essential character of an ombudsman rather than of a tribunal, and they are profoundly different from the Calcutt recommendations.

We have sought to provide a series of protections for the citizen and, at the same time, to enhance the rights and status of the press. The first protection for the citizen should lie in the responsibility of the individual journalist seeking to balance the obligation to provide information and to behave decently. The second defence of the citizen lies in the responsibility of the editor. We then envisage the readers' representative being brought into play. Only thereafter would we wish to see appeals made to the press commission, and only in the event of the commission failing to provide satisfactory remedies would the plaintiff have occasion to go to the ombudsman, and ultimately to the court.

The powers that would be vested in the press commission by the industry—to impose fines and require compensation—would help to ensure that problems were resolved informally and early. Ms Chapman described our recommendations as

"layer upon layer of red tape."

I regard them as sensible, practical, mostly familiar and readily intelligible. They are a serious attempt to provide remedies and, at the same time, to strengthen the standing of the press. I hope that the press will increasingly appreciate and accept that to be the case. Initially, the press marginalised our report as a news story and rubbished it in editorials.

The press mediate information, including the debate on this issue, to the public. It is a responsibility of the press to see that the public have a fuller and fairer opportunity than they have has so far to consider our recommendations and articulate their own response. I hope that the Government will accept our recommendations. Whatever the forthcoming White Paper and prospective legislation may contain, the Select Committee, on behalf of Parliament, will continue to attend vigilantly and regularly to these issues, which are of great and enduring importance to our democracy and culture.

7.14 pm

Mr. Bryan Davies (Oldham, Central and Royton): When the Select Committee, on which I had the honour to serve, began its study into the press and intrusion on the privacy of the individual, I had a fair degree of scepticism about the wisdom of the task that we had set ourselves. I wondered whether we could achieve results that would prove significant for effective legislative action.

I was sceptical for several basic reasons, the first being that the press in Britain is already extensively regulated; indeed, the British press is among the most regulated in the western democracies. The legislation regulating it applies to contempt of court, official secrets, the prevention of terrorism, police and criminal evidence and the law of libel. The laws provide a battery of constraints on journalists in general and on particular types of investigative journalism.

It is obvious that some restrictions are available predominantly to the wealthy—that particularly applies to the law of libel—and do not provide an extension of freedom for the ordinary individual. Other restrictions are imposed by government agencies and, to that extent, distort democracy by adding an authoritarian element to the relationship between government and the press.

I share with the overwhelming majority of hon. Members a respect for the significance of a free press as a crucial element in our democracy. Striving for a free press in western Europe has been critical to the dismantling of autocratic regimes and their replacement with democratic ones. Even today, those seeking to impose autocratic regimes on society move rapidly, and with such force as they can muster, on radio and television stations and newspaper offices. Control of the media is crucial to autocratic politicians.

A free press developed out of 19th century ideas of classic liberalism—for example, the free press of diverging opinions and conflicting analyses of John Stuart Mill—and today it is the oligopolistic press of the late 20th century. Our problem when we talk about the press—I am not sure that we have identified the point clearly enough during the debate, so I shall spend some time on it—is that we relate differently to the various models of the press that we have in mind.

Most hon. Members who have a close relationship with the organs of information in our constituencies—in particular, the local and regional press—are aware of the generally high standards that are adopted. Most of our proposals, including the code of conduct and even the strengthened code, are regarded by most local and regional journalists, particularly those in training, as a matter of course. They say that that is how they conduct their business, and when representatives of the regional press came before the Select Committee, they pointed out that the abuses to which we alluded were foreign to their activities.

A dimension of the press not to be overlooked is the glory that we in this country can take in our quality newspapers, which bear comparison with any in the world. When I went to the United States, it was the first time that I had been engaged in a serious study of Washington and New York newspapers. I was very impressed with them and with the framework within which they operated, but I still would say that, in terms of entertainment, informative value and quality of journalism, the best newspapers in this country bear comparison with any elsewhere.

There is, however, another big category of the press to which nearly all this debate is directed—tabloid journalism. That is what we are talking about predominantly. We are talking about that element of the press that seems to be totally resistant to and contemptuous of public opinion when it goes about its business of entertaining, and occasionally informing, the nation.

That section of the press is under considerable pressures. We should recognise that they are the pressures of the major combines, the media empires that have developed at this stage of our history. Those media empires, into which entry by any free agent or competing force is exceedingly difficult, those colossal operators in the industry of newspapers, have substantial power, but they collide with each other like great dinosaurs of the past.

One of the great functions of that kind of popular journalism has almost gone. It is not greatly in the business of conveying news. Where does the ordinary member of the public get his or her news? It is predominantly from the electronic media. I was brought up in a household in which the *News Chronicle* was a highly valued newspaper. It was greatly appreciated because it was a popular paper which informed and carried really effective news coverage—

[Mr. Bryan Davies]

[Interruption.] Well, hon. Members are calling out some of the more attractive features of the *News Chronicle*. It had, of course, its lighter side, but it was a newspaper that informed its readers; it was a serious newspaper, while having considerable popular appeal.

Why is it that today it is much more difficult for the *Daily Mirror*, *Today*, *The Star* or—dare I say it?—*The Sun* to achieve that kind of balance? The answer is straightforward: they are not largely in the business of conveying news. Television has taken that function away from them, as radio did to a degree in the past. Watching television news is the way in which people keep up to date with what is going on in the world.

The tabloid newspapers are rather more in the area of comment and entertainment. Indeed, the editor of *The Sun* said with great assertiveness when he appeared before the Select Committee that he is in the entertainment business, that his paper is a lively read. The problem with that is that anything goes. For many newspapers, locked into circulation wars, the kind of standards set by C. P. Scott are almost totally irrelevant to the economic exercise in which they are involved. As a consequence, we have the development of newspapers which, on occasion, exploit ordinary individuals.

We have heard today from members of the Select Committee of the extent to which there are gross and damaging intrusions into the privacy of ordinary individuals; I do not want to recall those cases, because they have been well identified. It is not politicians, not people of power, not the great, the good or even the bad, but ordinary people who get caught up in news stories.

We should all recognise—the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) referred to this—that privacy is a human right. I am not sure that we in this country are sufficiently appreciative of the fact that certain aspects of privacy are under gross invasion from technological development.

I am sure that we are all greatly relieved that parts of our shopping centres may be giving extra protection against terrorist outrage through surveillance devices. But such devices, extended right across the land, have a real danger implicit in them. After all, George Orwell's "1984" was based on the premise that technological devices would be developed that would give the authorities the opportunity for surveillance at all times. I am not seeking to deny the extensive efforts that must be made to protect our people against the terrorist outrage. I am merely saying that technological developments have an implicit danger.

There is no doubt that the members of the Select Committee were shocked when we saw the range of devices available. That which only 10 or 15 years ago belonged to the fantasy world of James Bond now seems to be purchasable at the local store for a quite modest sum. I do not think that, at the moment, members of the public can buy some of the more esoteric models, such as the tiny little camera that photographs with great accuracy, in enormous detail and from a great height, and is carried in a small model aircraft—which my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) suggested could be flown by remote control over Buckingham palace. I can think of many other areas where that device might be used with even greater effect.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): I just want to remind the House that one cannot even trust a cricket stump nowadays.

Mr. Davies: Indeed, views from certain cricket stumps have added to the embarrassment of English batsmen who cannot recognise a leg break, let alone cope with a camera.

Such is the intrusion on the privacy of individuals through bugging and surveillance devices and the anxiety of the nation that the case has been made in the Select Committee report for the Government to recognise that early action is necessary. Such laws should be directed not against the press, but towards restricting anyone from using those devices unless it can be shown that there is good cause, on the basis of the public interest, for such use.

There is, of course, a public interest in permitting certain use of these devices. I say nothing about the state authorities and security services, but we must be careful not to restrict investigative journalism. Some of our outstanding television programmes and journalism have been based on the justifiable use of devices against criminals, where their criminal activities would not otherwise have been revealed. Through the use of those devices and through intelligent action by journalists, those abuses have been exposed.

Mr. Maclennan: Did the Committee give serious consideration to the difficulty of drawing the line between what is in the public interest and what is not, even where intrusion into grief is important?

It seems that in citing the most obvious cases of where intrusion into grief was unacceptable, the Committee may have overlooked a difficulty. I recall a case in the north of Scotland many years ago. The BBC interviewed the wives of some fishermen who were missing at sea. It was a harrowing interview to observe and many people might have said—as I did at the time—that it was tasteless and unwise. The BBC was criticised for broadcasting the interview.

But it was also clear that some of the ladies thought it right to talk of their harrowing experience to bring home to the public the appalling risks that fishermen face. Perhaps that would have rebutted any allegations that the interview was an unacceptable intrusion. It seems that a case is not always automatically clearly on one side or the other of the line.

Mr. Davies: No one underestimates the difficulties, and many of us have witnessed similar harrowing interviews on television. I take the hon. Gentleman's point that consent is everything. If the person being interviewed has consented to that interview, then, harrowing as the experience may be, that certainly justifies the action of the journalist.

In the cases before the Committee, people who wanted their privacy respected could not get away from foot-in-the-door journalists. The journalists were camped on their doorstep, would never take no for an answer and were prepared to go to almost any lengths, with endless telephone calls throughout the night and so on, in order to get their story.

These are, of course, difficult issues. There will always be an area of judgment. In one of the more extreme cases, the editor of *The Sun* confessed to getting one thing wrong. It was amazing that he could admit to that. He regretted publishing certain photographs of the horrors of the Hillsborough disaster, and the suggestion that, in some

horrendous way, the fans had brought the disaster on themselves. The Hillsborough disaster still had to be reported to the nation in all its horror, and major lessons had to be learned from it.

There is always the difficulty of striking a balance in any disaster, and there is not the slightest doubt about that. I can reassure the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland that the Select Committee did not skate lightly over such issues—far from it. The Committee report was the product of many intensive hours of cross-examination. Great anxiety was expressed about the implications of some of the recommendations until the Committee teased the matters out.

I confess that all along I was sceptical about whether the Committee could produce a report that went effectively much beyond a strengthened code of practice. I saw the Committee's work reflected in what I thought was a more positive response from the press as we proceeded. I should like, however, to reinforce one or two points made by other members of the Committee on just how difficult it might be to rely on self-regulation alone. I hope that self-regulation is the order of the day as far as possible.

All the members of the Committee regarded the concept of the ombudsman as a last resort. They hoped that a strengthened and reasonably enforced Press Complaints Commission code of conduct would largely do the job. I shall quote from that famous occasion when the editor of *The Sun* graced the Committee with his presence, to the huge entertainment of the nation. He was asked —I am too modest to suggest who by—

"So you are now discontinuing practices which you were conducting or certain members of your staff were conducting prior to the Press Complaints Commission development?"

He replied:

"I think that it would be fair to say that the spotlight is on us in a way which would make us foolhardy to do anything which would attract more organised opprobrium than already exists. So, yes, we do try harder now and, yes, whether the expression is 'cleaned up our act' or not I am not sure, but certainly we do try hard to make sure that we do not get into a position where our critics can attack us. That does not mean to say we will stop publishing stories about Norman Lamont's credit card but it does mean to say that when we publish something we are 101 per cent. certain that it is 101 per cent. true."

That new development took our breath away, but it emerged from the great pressure of external forces and had nothing to do with self-motivation or self-regulation. When dealing with tabloid journalism on a national level, we must recognise the nature of the tough nut that we are seeking to crack. I do not mean by that that we are seeking to constrain tabloid journalism unfairly; but we are expecting it to have some respect for the truth and some respect for the privacy of the individual, particularly the ordinary individual.

Of course, people who take up public office or hold high positions in the land must be subject to a different kind of challenge—they ought to be. We all believe that the press has an investigative and challenging role to play, but it has no right to infringe the privacy of ordinary individuals against a generally held code of conduct on the grounds that anything goes and that freedom of the press means a licence to print almost anything.

My remarks have been fairly general because other members of the Committee have dealt with detailed aspects of our proposals. Although I was reluctant to accept the Committee's conclusions and hoped that there would be more self-regulation and less regulation by law, I say to the Secretary of State that the case is proven with regard to the development of new technological surveillance devices. They need legislative control. Also, certain sections of the press will have to come to terms with a structure that will be adequate when self-regulation fails.

7.39 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North):

"Journalism is the vilest and most degrading of all trades because more affectation and hypocrisy and more subservience to the baser feelings of others are necessary for carrying it on than for any other trade from that of brothel-keeper upwards."

I declare my interest as a professional journalist. I first heard that quote from John Stuart Mill about a month ago at a lecture. He wrote it in the 19th century and, as far as I can see, not a lot has changed since. Certainly nothing has changed in the month since I first heard it to make me believe that the journalist as a breed is held in anything much higher than contempt by the British public.

I would like to pay my tribute to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and all the members of the Committee, most of whom have spoken in the debate already, for the work that they have done on their report. I thought that press coverage of the publication of the report was churlish, but it was, I suppose, to be expected. Whether or not we like all the recommendations—and perhaps some of us do not—the Committee did an extremely thorough job, both in the way in which it took its evidence and in the way in which it presented it. I would extend those congratulations to David Calcutt, his team and his report as well.

At the invitation of my local radio station, I took part in a broadcast on this subject earlier today. In theory, lined up against me was an official of the National Union of Journalists, my professional association. The interviewer asked him, boldly and straight out, why journalists reported untruths. I imagined that the representative of me and of other hon. Members who are members of the NUJ would leap to our defence, but not a bit of it. He said,

"We have to, because if we didn't we'd lose our jobs, because the proprietors of the newspapers make us report untruths."

Having agreed to take part in the programme and to exercise some small criticism of the press and suggest how it might improve its practice, I found myself instead in the bizarre position of having to leap to the defence of my journalist colleagues. They have always struck me as a robust breed, well able to look after themselves. Perish the thought that a professional journalist would be browbeaten to the extent of going away and writing untruths because his lord and master told him to.

I put this thesis to Andrew Neill of *The Sunday Times* some time ago, when I suggested to him that the Murdoch chain of newspapers had a vendetta against the royal family, that this was an edict from the top and it was why they were doing it—because I could not think of any other reason why they should do it. The wrath of God, or at least of Neill, fell on my head. Did I seriously think that he and his colleagues were for sale like that? I do not know the answer, but he did not think so.

The NUJ representative on the programme pointed out that the journalists that I talked to were lobby correspondents. I must confess that there was a faint self-interest in this. I thought that, if I said nice things about journalists on the radio, I might be reported well. That is the way we work, is it not? All I can say to the

[Mr. Roger Gale]

lobby correspondents—if there are any left in the building at this time of night—is that the officials of the NUJ do not appear to regard lobby correspondents as "real" journalists. Somewhere out there is apparently another breed of journalist writing "real" stories for newspapers, and those stories are the ones that they must write, even though they are untrue, because the newspaper proprietors say they must.

So we come back to the standards of the press. As a professional journalist, I have experienced a growing sense of concern, not just over recent months but over recent years. There is not much doubt in the minds of many that the standard of written journalism has fallen. It is that concern which led to threats of action—threats of action by Calcutt, threats of action by hon. Members, such as the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) in his Bill, and threats of action by the Select Committee in its report.

What is the response of what used to be called Fleet street to these threats of action? Self-righteous indignation. We have heard the quotes from the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) and from my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth). The headlines—in so far as one can call them headlines—that came out when the Select Committee published its report were universally critical. There was scarcely a word of praise, not even for the workmanship of the report itself. The only greater squeals that I heard from the press came when there was some vague suggestion that they might be faced with value added tax on newspapers. The self-righteous self-interest of the press over these issues beggars belief.

We have been discussing people in public life. Exceptionally for me, I have agreed with most of what has been said by most hon. Members but I want to take issue —courteously, I hope—with the slight hint of humbug when hon. Members on both sides of the House have referred to "ordinary people", and have said that it is the interests of ordinary people that they are trying to protect.

I believe that. I too want to protect the interests of ordinary people. Like every other hon. Member I represent thousands of them. But I believe that there is a case for protecting the interests of those who are apparently un-ordinary people, people in public life. I think that they have a right to protection.

No one has said that today, because we know perfectly well that such a sentiment will not find favour with the press. It will be regarded as self-interest, and the press will suppose that, because we are trying to protect ourselves, we have something to hide. It is not quite like that.

The right hon. Member for Gorton has returned to the Chamber. I paid what I hope was a kind tribute to the work that he and his Committee had done, and I would like to repeat it for his benefit now that he is here. The only quarrel that I have with his speech was when he said that we are all politicians and that we have to dish it out and be ready to take it.

I know what he means and I agree with him. Of course we dish it out. We dish it out across the Chamber day after day. We hammer away at each other like blazes. That is the cut and thrust of politics. That is why we are in an adversarial Chamber. It is why there are two red lines on the carpet two swords' lengths apart. That conflict is the stuff of our lives, and we have to be ready to take it. We have to be ready to take it from the Opposition Benches. The Prime Minister has to take it from the Leader of the Opposition, and the Leader of the Opposition has to take it from the Prime Minister. We expect that.

But what is this "it" that we have to take? Is it the political sparring in here, is it genuine political conflict, or is it the God-given right of the press to take anybody in public life, of any standing and in any circumstances, say about them any truth or untruth and demolish them? If that is so, I do not believe that people in public life have to take "it".

The royal family has been subjected to this over the past 18 months or so in particular. No hon. Member could reasonably stand, hand on heart, and say that the royal family has never done anything worthy of criticism, that we should be totally subservient and utter no word against them, in the press or elsewhere. That would be quite wrong. On the other hand, I may be naive but there seems to me to have been a concerted effort on the part of certain sections of the media coldly and calculatedly to seek to demolish an institution that means a very great deal to a very great number of people.

I met three News International senior executives in the House recently and laid into them on the subject. They asked me why I was being difficult and having a go at them about cross-media ownership. I said that it was because I knew that was the only way that I could hurt them, as it was their Achilles heel. I said that they were hurting people of whom I was fond and I felt that I wanted to hurt them back. That may not be a noble sentiment for an hon. Member to feel, but I felt it in my guts.

One of the three News International representatives was an American, and I said that I would explain to him exactly how I felt. I said, "It is as though I come to see you, take the American flag, pee on it and burn it on the White House lawn. That is what you are doing to my royal family." I believe that, and he understood my feeling as I had translated it into language that he, as an American, could understand.

I wonder whether attacks on senior Members of Parliament are as justified as we pretend we believe them to be because we are supposed to take them. I wonder whether it is in order for someone like my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) to be dragged, with his family, through the dirt, day after day and month after month until he breaks—not personally, as he is too tough for that—but politically? I shall not be party political as I am not defending merely my hon. Friends. I hope that Opposition Members understand that. Were the political ball to bounce the other way, what I am saying could apply as much to Opposition Members as to my hon. Friends.

Yesterday, I listened to a speech in the Chamber delivered by a bitter man—it saddened me enormously. He may not prove to be proud of that speech, which I did not think was dignified or fair. It was a bitter speech, and I understood why. If, day after day, not only I and my economic policies—which are fair game for the House and the press—but every detail of my private life, my credit card, the booze that I did not buy, the girl friend that I did not have, were dragged through the press while my family were trying to take O or A-levels, I would feel bitter and, ultimately, I would break. That is what happened to my right hon. friend. If the leader of Her Majesty's

Government—presently a Conservative Government—is relentlessly attacked over a period, ultimately he or she will break.

There is a grave danger that we in this country will find ourselves, to a greater or lesser extent, in the position of those in the United States. Relentless exposure in the media, particularly television, but also in print journalism, creates the danger that, unless one is the archangel Gabriel, one will break. Eventually, only men and women of no calibre will stand for public office. That is why I believe that we have a duty to protect, not only ordinary people, but those in high office.

Mr. Maclennan: I have been listening carefully to the hon. Gentleman's words. He referred to the case of the right hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor). We could seek to prevent the press expressing its opinion and drawing things out month after month. I thought that the action of the press in the case of the right hon. and learned Member for Putney was repulsive. I think that I am the only Member of Parliament, other than the Prime Minister, who declared that publicly before the right hon. and learned Member went from office when I wrote a letter to *The Independent* in support of him. Therefore, I accept what the hon. Gentleman has said about such pressure becoming an intolerable burden.

However, would it not be better for people to say, "It does not matter—the issue relates to his private life, not his competence"? Until people are prepared to do that, we shall face the problem described by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Gale: I agree with part of what the hon. Gentleman said. In another country in Europe, somewhere further south, where people's private lives are treated by the public and the press in a more relaxed and, perhaps, less hypocritical and more honest fashion than in this country, it would not matter. In many respects, this country is still extremely puritanical.

Earlier in his speech the hon. Gentleman referred to the suggestion—but did not pursue it to its logical conclusion—that the fourth estate was beginning to regard itself as the Government of this country. No matter who is elected, the general media—not just the press and print journalists—engage in feeding frenzies and regurgiate their own stories.

They believe that they can not only decide what policies should be pursued—any journalist is entitled to speculate and have an opinion on a subject on which he or she is an expert—and not only who should be Prime Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Home Secretary, Leader of the Opposition, or leader of the Liberal party, but to make a sustained effort to bring that about.

The press will say that I am paranoid and raving mad, but I am concerned about the problem. I wonder whether we in public life will be able to sustain the job that we want to do on behalf of the ordinary people to whom so many colleagues have referred. If we have to spend all our time worrying about the subjects we are now discussing, ordinary people will miss out on a range of issues. The Government of the day, of whatever political persuasion, will find themselves in a relentless battle against those who think that they are the real Government of the country, not the elected Government.

It is interesting how Lord Rees-Mogg, who has never been elected to anything in his life—except, possibly, a club——

Mr. Jessel: It is a very good club.

Mr. Gale: I am ashamed—my hon. Friend says that it is a good club, and he is wearing its tie tonight.

Mr. Jessel: My hon. Friend is also a member.

Mr. Gale: I was going to say that I am about to resign from it.

We have a genuine cause for concern. The net result of what I have been saying is that the press will say that I want to gag free speech. I do not—I am a journalist, and write and broadcast on a reasonably regular basis. I enjoy doing so and have earned my living through it—not now, but I did for a long time. As far as I am aware, I have nothing personal to hide, apart from the things that most of us want to hide, like overdrafts.

However, the problem is not confined merely to people in public life. I have chosen to defend people in public life because it seems to be the one sector that has been neglected throughout the debate. When one speaks at this time in a debate, most of the good comments have been made. It is nice to be able to say something different. In a Gallup poll in *The Daily Telegraph* published in February, only 10 per cent. of the respondents said that they had any confidence in the press. That number is down from 32 per cent. 10 years ago——

Mr. Corbett: It is still very high at 10.

Mr. Gale: It was published in February; perhaps the most recent figure would be different.

My friendly NUJ official says that this is due to market forces. Newspapers have become very commercial and journalists have to tell lies—they have to do what their editors want them to do. The style of newspapers has changed. It certainly has. But I am not so certain that that has to do with the big bad barons of the press, as at least one Opposition Member thinks. It might have a lot more to do with competition from the mechanical media. The hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Davies) rightly said that most people get their news from television and radio, so newspapers are having a harder time. Why buy one at all?

Dog is eating dog: the circulation war is critical. Because of changes in working practices and the introduction of new technology, newspapers could be much more profitable now, but the competition between them is also much greater, and it would be foolish to deny that that has had some effect.

This morning on the radio, I asked my NUJ friend, who will own the newspapers if not the barons of the press. Will they be run by workers' co-operatives? He held up *The Independent* as a shining example. My answer was that it is not independent.

We need a free press in a free society. The free press must have the right to question the establishment, but with that freedom must go responsibility. I believe that the Press Complaints Commission has failed dismally and become discredited. If it was not before, it became discredited the day it was revealed that Lord McGregor had information about the royal family that was in the interests of the press but he failed to publish it. I cannot see how the PCC in its present form can continue.

I carefully read the Select Committee's suggestions. I am not certain that I would like an ombudsman. I certainly do not want the statutory Calcutt tribunal. But it is necessary to recreate a genuinely independent commission

[Mr. Gale]

that can promote a code of practice of the sort that the Select Committee annexed to its report. I should like that code of conduct incorporated in contracts of employment.

Training is the bedrock. Several hon. Members have referred to the quality of local papers. Of course we would do that, because we want to keep in well with our local papers even if we fall out with everyone else. Nevertheless, the quality of local papers is in some ways much higher than that of the national press. Standards of reporting are high because local editors usually jump up and down on trainee journalists and make certain that they get their stories right—because if they do not, people will write in to complain that their names have been spelt wrongly in a report on a local funeral. Editors can do without that sort of hassle.

I have much sympathy with the views of editors who have told me—and no doubt the Committee—that we should not pick on them: we should be pursuing the tabloids which are creating all the trouble. I do not want to pick on them. An independent commission capable of promoting a code of practice within contracts of employment and of promoting training for young journalists would, I believe, do the job.

The Press Complaints Commission is widely regarded as the creature of the press, which owns and pays for it and effectively decides who will sit on it. At the eleventh hour, after all this fuss, the Commission has, in theory, tipped the balance in favour of lay members—but we all know that that is not enough.

We are talking about professionalism, but I strongly believe that electronic eavesdropping and telephone tapping, and trespassing on and entering peoples' property and homes—not to mention intrusive photography using long lenses—are all unacceptable in a free society.

We hear a great deal about freedom of the press; we must also protect the freedom of the individual. I hope that that will be done, not in a press Bill, but under the criminal law in the next Criminal Justice Bill. I do not want, now or ever, one law for journalists and another for everyone else.

8.5 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I very much welcomed the Select Committee report, which is a thoughtful document. I have a number of reservations about it, however. It comes close after the Calcutt report and my own Bill. I believe that a new agenda is emerging from all the debates that we have had in recent years—an important agenda.

We are all in favour of some type of regulation; the questions that concern us are: what type of regulation, and how should we achieve it? I am increasingly of the view that we need to widen the debate to include electronic media. The Broadcasting Act 1990 no longer works well, not least because of technological changes. My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said that restrictions on television had to do in part with the limited number of frequencies. But the new technology means that there is no limit on the number of frequencies—cable television gets around all that.

Mr. Kaufman: What I sought to say was that as legislation is required to give the Government power to allocate frequencies, it is inevitable that that legislation should entail some form of regulation of television and radio. My hon. Friend is right to say that as we get 500 channels and as the Government find it difficult to be involved in that, so regulation of the electronic media by legislation will become more and more difficult—until, perhaps, it becomes impossible.

Mr. Soley: I am grateful. That fits in well with my argument. There are those who argue that, because of new technology, we should remove all regulation of the electronic media. But if we do, we shall run into the same sort of problems as we have with the press.

What sort of regulation should we go for? I have been making the following argument for many months because I regard it as central, even though it runs contrary to what people might expect me to say. The problem, in Britain particularly, is that the press and the media suffer from excessive regulation of the wrong type. Our type restricts good investigative journalism, but permits enormous abuses of people's rights. We must address that problem. We were warned by international bodies that we were losing some of our press freedom precisely because we had passed many laws in this century, and especially in the past 10 to 15 years, that seriously restricted press freedom. That issue is specially important.

It is not right to say, as some people have claimed from time to time, that we do not regulate the press. We have been regulating it by law for at least 100 years and the rules are in statute for anyone who cares to look at them. The press is mentioned and some of the rules protect press freedom. For example, journalists have the right in law to report some local authority committees to which the public do not have access. Press rights on Select Committees date back to legislation in the last century.

The other side of the coin is that there are restrictions on journalism and the media generally, such as the broadcasting ban on some of the groups associated with the paramilitary campaign in Northern Ireland. Every country in the world regulates its media. Britain does not have a general defence of press freedom or a freedom of information Act. The Select Committee report is right to recommend that there must be a freedom of information Act before there is any other restrictive legislation on the press. I am glad that that recommendation received all-party support.

I would go further because I have said in recent months that I should like to see not only a freedom of information Act but a general defence of press freedom. The British legal system does not normally contain such a positive defence, but I remind the House that Britain wrote most of the legislation for the European Court of Human Rights, including article 10 of the convention which deals with freedom of expression. We often say, "Don't do as we do; do as we tell you." Although others follow that advice, unfortunately we do not. If we adopted article 10 it would be much easier to adopt article 8, which deals with privacy. I have some reservations about the wording of articles 8 and 10. In many respects, article 10 is restrictive, but if it and article 8 were on the statute book, many of the problems that the debate has addressed would not be so serious.

As I have said, all countries regulate the media, but the question that arises concerns the type of regulation and how to implement it. Britain is not now as forward on the defence of press freedom as it was in the last century. I have given editors some tough times in discussions with

them when I have told them that editors have been among the most weak-kneed and ineffectual in standing up for press freedom. They got wise over "Spycatcher" and on that they were good. Throughout the 1980s, I warned the press that press freedom was being seriously eroded.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Gorton was an Opposition Front-Bench spokesman on home affairs, and I was his deputy when the effects of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 were being felt. That Act allows the police to seize journalistic material. With one or two honourable exceptions, the press ignored that legislation and its impact on press freedom, which was serious.

The press ignored the prevention of terrorism legislation which required journalists to name their sources. We saw the effect of that when last year Channel 4's Box Productions was fined £75,000 and warned that if it did not name its sources on future occasions it would face a much heavier punishment. We can no longer say that we have been defending press freedom.

I think that it was a deputy editor of *The Times* who once said to me, "Why do you think that you can defend press freedom better than we can? We can do that ourselves." They have not and they do not. A damning criticism of the press throughout the 1980s—a period that was not good for the press generally—is that it was weak-kneed about press freedom. We need a stronger voice and that is why my Bill tries to have press freedom included on the political agenda. Obviously, the best way to do that is to have a freedom of information Act or a press freedom defence at law. I should prefer both and only the Government can provide them.

The hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) and some other hon. Members spoke about the way that the press attacks certain people. The hon. Gentleman gave the example of the former Chancellor of the Exchequer. The difference between the tabloid, mass circulation and other media is that those papers need to attack people or organisations that are unpopular. That is because they are driven by the market. A Chancellor who was immensely popular but whose economics was badly out would not be attacked in the same way, because mass-circulation newspapers are competing with each other at the very edge and have to fight desperately for the last inch of circulation. I shall shortly come to the way in which that affects the salacious details of stories.

I became deeply concerned about press freedom abuse in the 1980s when I saw the mass circulation tabloid press attacking minority groups. I agreed with some of those groups and disagreed with others, but I am basically a democrat and I believe that democracy is not just about the majority's right to rule but about the right of minorities to be protected. A tabloid monopolistic press, in the sense that it consisted of a few powerful groups, attacked individuals and organisations who were vulnerable and often unpopular.

I have mentioned previously the people who spoke up for those who were wrongly convicted of the Birmingham and Guildford pub bombings and the Broadwater Farm offences. Some of us were convinced at the time that people had been wrongfully convicted, and those who spoke up for them were attacked. Allowing that to happen is the modern equivalent of burning a witch at the stake. Sometimes people in minority groups are bad, sometimes they are mad, and sometimes they are sad. But sometimes they are right, and the important rule of news broadcasting should be to report their views and attitudes accurately. That is one of the reasons why accuracy is so important. The Secretary of State has heard me speak about this matter many times and I commend him for sitting through yet another of my speeches.

Accurate news reporting is the oxygen of democracy and the larger and more powerful our democracies become, the more important it is not to poison that oxygen. To do so is to poison democracy.

Sometimes editors talk to us and to everyone else as if freedom of the press belonged to them and the press. It does not; nor does it belong to Ministers or Members of Parliament. It belongs to the people. The freedom of the press is a collective right and such rights are extremely important. As with all rights, they need to be balanced against others with which they may conflict.

An individual has rights too, and one of them—which is also a collective right—is the right to expect news to be reported accurately and to have an independent means of settling a dispute if it cannot be settled in the normal way. I again urge the Secretary of State to bear that in mind when formulating policy. That collective right of the freedom of the press, which is so important to each and every one of us, has to be balanced by the rights of individuals which involve accuracy.

I am not saying that privacy is not important, but it is easier to deal with. I gave the examples of article 10 and article 8 of the European Convention. Although privacy produces some pretty horrendous cases, it represents a minority of the complaints about the press. The great majority of complaints about the press are about accuracy.

The hon. Member for Thanet, North said that only 10 per cent. believe the press. One of the tragedies of the British press that people do not believe it. That is sad. Journalism should be an honourable trade. If we cannot believe what we read in the paper, something has to be seriously wrong.

We make another error of judgment about the tabloids; they are not actually bad papers. They may be bad newspapers, but they are not bad papers. They provide information that people want, in an attractive, well-produced way which makes them attractive and people buy them. In doing that, they abuse the news and often use individuals to drive up circulation and profit from it.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The hon. Gentleman is eloquently making the case for the importance of all of us as citizens having a press that is honest, accurate and decent. Does he agree that, in a system of voluntary regulation, it is important that third-party complaints should be received and scrutinised? Does he agree that the problems of inaccuracy and invasion of privacy are not confined to the tabloid press?

Mr. Soley: I agree absolutely, certainly on third-party rights. The hon. Gentleman and I have been at one for some time on that.

The hon. Gentleman says that the problems are not confined to the press. When I first drew up my Bill, I wondered whether I should restrict it to certain mass circulation newspapers and legislate for a cut-off point at a circulation of 1 million, for example. I accept that local papers tend to be much better than tabloids, but, when I thought it through, I realised that what really matters is the citizens' right to accuracy, and even the best paper can get it wrong.

[Mr. Soley]

Good journalists should not take it as a slight that they get it wrong. It is hard to get it right all the time when one is working against deadlines. What matters—this is where the press is its own worst enemy—is that newspapers ought to be much more ready to say, "We got it wrong," and make corrections so that people have more confidence in them. I shall return to that point in a moment.

Sir David Calcutt's report interested me considerably, but it scared the pants off me. It is far too draconian. A number of people have not recognised just how draconian it is. Paragraph 7.6 for example, refers to editors being charged with the conspiracy laws if they collude in the publication of something that has been obtained by a breach of one of those laws.

The conspiracy laws are extremely serious and contain long sentences of imprisonment running into many years. If they are to be used on editors, one can envisage sliding down the dangerous road of press regulation in such a way that editors and journalists become fearful of running difficult stories. We should not be putting them off, because they might be good investigative journalists who do a good job and protect the rights of society.

I want to emphasise to my right hon. Friend the Member for Gorton one of my comments on the Select Committee report. I do not think that my right hon. Friend can argue that he is not recommending statutory control. He is. The ombudsman that he would appoint would have statutory powers.

I recognise that my right hon. Friend hopes that that statutory person and body would not be used because the press would reform itself. When I heard him say that for the first time some months ago, that delightful phrase sprang to my lips about the triumph of hope over experience. Because of the market-driven nature of some tabloids, I do not think they can discipline themselves in the way that he would like. Therefore, we would have statutory control.

I asked myself what are the differences between my right hon. Friend's approach and mine. There are a couple of interesting differences on that narrow point because there is a great deal of overlap between what I was trying to achieve and what appeared in the Select Committee report.

My Bill proposed that there should be a statutory committee as opposed to a statutory ombudsman. One of the differences in favour of not restricting the press by legislation was my right hon. Friend's suggestion that the complainant should be required to go first to the voluntary body and only if that fails to go on to the statutory body. That was not the case in my Bill, although I would have been quite happy to amend my Bill to make that case, as it seems a sensible approach. I am not convinced that it is necessary, but it is certainly not a bad idea.

The difference between my right hon. Friend's approach and mine is that his required an adjudication by just one person. That is one of my reservations about the ombudsman system.

Mr. Corbett: At the end of the day.

Mr. Soley: My hon. Friend on the Front Bench says, "At the end of the day." If we are to have adjudication by a statutory person, in this case the ombudsman, that person is going to adjudicate on cases. If it is in statute, we must assume that it will happen.

One reason why I wanted a committee is that it is vital to balance the views of the complainant with the need for press freedom. One proposal put to me was that my committee needed to be split into two, with one half dealing with press freedom and the other half dealing with complaints. When difficult cases occurred, the two would adjudicate jointly, thus balancing the press freedom argument with the press responsibility argument. One of my reservations about the ombudsman, which, in many ways is an attractive option, is that it is one person. We have to think about that carefully, because we then come to the second difference between my right hon. Friend's approach in the Select Committee and mine.

The ombudsman has power to award compensation on any breach of the code. I carefully excluded a financial penalty until the last stage of a court case, if it got that far, except on accuracy. The press would have to correct accuracy, and if they failed to correct it or if the editor wanted to challenge it, they could go to court and only at that stage would a financial penalty become possible. The only requirement would be correction, and a financial penalty could not be imposed for any other breach of the code.

One of my anxieties about Sir David Calcutt's approach and that of the Select Committee is that, if a potential financial payment is involved, be it compensation or fine for any breach of the code, and if the code is 40, 50 or 60 clauses long, what does a good investigative journalist do? He is not only looking over his shoulder at the libel laws, which are grossly draconian and need to be reduced to protect press freedom, but has to consider the possibility of a fine or compensation for any breach of the code.

It then becomes difficult for a good investigative journalist to take risks unless—this is one way we might be able to get out of the trap—we have a strong defence of press freedom at law. That is why it is not just a matter of freedom of information, but a general defence of press freedom.

On that basis, we might be able to say that there should be compensation for any breach of the code, but there should also be a separate law which stands in its own right which, because we know the example best in the United States, as our countries are so close on these issues, is something equivalent to the first amendment. That is one way of addressing that problem.

Mr. Corbett: I understand exactly what my hon. Friend has said. However, would he also take on board the fact that there is no desire among journalists or editors for any special laws to give them special positions? That is one of the main points of the report of the National Heritage Select Committee and other reports on the topic. That is why the public interest defence is so important, because it can apply not just to journalists, but to every citizen.

Mr. Soley: I understand that, but a number of cases have been quoted today—for example, the case of the right hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor)—and all of them would be allowed, as far as I can see, under the Select Committee approach, the Sir David Calcutt approach and most other approaches.

The public interest opt-out would enable the press to point out that a person in a senior public position had made a statement of double standards by calling for family values while breaking those values. We can go through that loop at the moment, but it is not an especially good way of doing things. We would end up having lots of laws, each one with a built-in opt-out clause in terms of public interest.

I ask my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) to bear in mind the history of laws going back at least 100 years that are there to protect the press. We already have such laws, so why not have another, but one that becomes a measure relating to those issues, rather than trying to have strange opt-out clauses in privacy legislation and so on?

I shall address the question of the Press Complaints Commission because the frequent complaint made against me and many other hon. Members is that we have all said that the commission has failed, but that we will not say why. I keep producing arguments to explain how it has failed, and now I shall produce another argument. My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Davies) said that in January, Kelvin MacKenzie gave evidence that *The Sun* would become 101 per cent. true.

In February, a headline appeared on the front page of *The Sun* in relation to the tragic murder of Jamie Bulger. It read:

"Boy 12 is held for Jamie murder."

Much further down the story it quoted the police saying:

"We do not hold the murderer in these cells".

The boy of 12 was being held as a witness and the police made that clear, so they cannot be blamed for making a misleading statement. That headline, which was a clear breach of the 101 per cent. rule by any standard, was never corrected—unless it has been corrected in the past week. That is a clear breach and a clear example of why we do not have confidence in the Press Complaints Commission.

I shall tell the House what has happened to me since that time. I had a debate with a number of journalists, one of whom was Bridget Rowe, who was then the editor of the *Sunday Mirror*. I thought that I had got the journalists on this one and I waved the headline around with gay abandon in the middle of the debate. To my amazement, not only Bridget Rowe, but one or two others started shouting at me, "Why do you keep waving that paper around?" None of them said that the headline was wrong and that it must be corrected.

It is as a result of such attitudes that we are so angry and that is why ordinary people—whatever that phrase means—are so angry about the press. There is an arrogance in the press which leads members of the press to believe that they do not have to say that anything is wrong. The headline is an example of press reporting that led me throughout the 1980s to fear for justice for individuals. The boy, who was not held for the murder at any time, was branded as the murderer.

There is another example, from the many that I have given in the past, of how the Press Complaints Commission is failing. I spoke some time later to a senior member of the commission. He said that he was aware of the story, but that the problem was that the commission could not find the family to complain. The hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) spoke about third-party complaints. During the debate in which Bridget Rowe and others were busy attacking me, I was told that it was my fault that such things went on because I had not complained. I suddenly found myself on the defensive. I thought, "Hang on, why am I on the defensive? I did not do this."

I made that point to the man from the Press Complaints Commission. I said, "It is no wonder that you cannot find that family. You do not have to have too much nous to work out from the story, even assuming that only a tiny part of it is true, that the family were homeless." That point was given away by the description of the residence in which they lived. It was also clear—I put this as neutrally as I can—that the family had many problems. They were not the sort of family who would have been able to complain easily on their own behalf or even through another person.

I made all those points to the commissioner. He said, "How far do we go down this road?" My answer is simple. Any effective body must be proactive and not just reactive. The commission did not need a complaint. Everyone knew within hours that the story was wrong. All that needed to happen was for the editor or someone else, perhaps a member of the commission, to say, "This is seriously wrong. It is a headline story. It brands a child who is not a killer as a killer. You must put it right. You do not need anyone to complain to do that." My example shows why none of us has any confidence in the pathetic Press Complaints Commission, which seems more interested in finding excuses for inaction than in being proactive.

I do not expect the commission to read every paper produced throughout the United Kingdom every day, but I expect it to keep a watching brief. The comissioners could look at certain groups of newspapers from time to time to review them. They could make it easier for people to pass on information and they could assess it. They should act on their own initiative without waiting for a family who are obviously vulnerable, someone on their behalf or a Member of Parliament who feels strongly about the issue to raise the complaint with them. They should not need that if they are to be taken seriously as an effective body.

There is another case at which hon. Members should look carefully. I do not intend to refer to it in detail because it is also sub judice. One of the cases to which I referred during my hearings was the case of the Taylor sisters who were charged with murder and found guilty. Their case is before the Appeal Court today and part of the grounds of the appeal are press inaccuracy and press distortion. I shall say no more about the case because it is before the Appeal Court.

What I will say to all hon. Members is that they should look at the case with great care. It is profoundly interesting and it shows all the dangers, to which I have referred over the years, of press freedom being abused to such an extent that people are held wrongly in custody. I think of my comments about wrongful convictions and about it being so hard to get certain newspapers to report people's comments accurately so that they could have their case heard by the rest of the public.

That point brings me to the publication of details. There are a number of examples. The hon. Member for Thanet, North spoke about attacks on the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont). One of the most important points for us to bear in mind is that, when the press report cases such as that of the right hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), for example, or when they report on the royal family, we should recognise that there is almost certainly a let-out in law—as suggested by

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the Select Committee, by Sir David Calcutt and by myself—to allow those cases to be reported. I accept that that is right.

I have a strange relationship with *The Sun*. At first, it published photographs of me with fangs so that I looked slightly like a vampire. When I said that *The Sun* was right to publish the fact that there was a relationship between Prince Charles and his partner because it had a bearing on the monarchy and therefore on the constitution, but that it was wrong to print the salacious details, it produced another photograph, the "statesmen Soley" photograph. That began to ruin my street image. There had been three attacking editorials in *The Sun* over the past month which had done me an immense amount of good. I should record my thanks to Mr. MacKenzie for those attacks just because he did so much for my street credibility. The important point is not that the story can be reported, but that salacious detail is published when it does not need to be.

Another example relates to a constituent of mine—the young man alleged to have committed a murder, who escaped from a holding centre. Because he is under 18, he cannot be named or photographed. The *Evening Standard* and *The Sun* both ran stories saying that it was wrong that they could not publish photographs of that young man, and then did so in breach of the law. I accept that there is sometimes a case for publishing photographs of someone under age who has not been proven guilty but is regarded as dangerous, but perhaps it should be done through the court system. However, the press was wrong to print alongside the photograph details of the crime and of those affected by it—in one case the aunt of the victim—because that puts in the minds of those who end up as jurors dealing with the case that the individual concerned is guilty of the offence.

It is the same with the sex stories about, for example, the right hon. and learned Member for Putney or the royal family. If a Minister says that he is a man of the family and a member of a party that supports family values, but does something different, or if a member of the royal family is involved, which has a bearing on the constutution, there may be a case for reporting the affairs. However, there is no case for reporting the salacious details of conversations or publishing pictures of, for example, the Duchess of York at a swimming pool. It is not necessary to report the salacious details to let the public know that someone is having an affair and that is an example of double standards or that there are implications for the monarchy.

The problem for the press is that it does not want to print a story without the salacious detail because that is what sells the newspapers, as do attacks on unpopular people such as a Chancellor of the Exchequer or a group saying that the people who were convicted of blowing up the Birmingham pub are innocent. The newspapers do not want to attack anything popular because that would affect circulation. That is the difference between the regulated electronic media, which do not have the same market competition, and the unregulated press in the tabloid, monopolistic structure where there is an interest in market share.

The Secretary of State cannot ignore the issue of ownership. We must deal with the monopolistic structure at the sharp end of the market. It is easy just to attack the journalists and editors, but they are driven by the economic policy—"You must sell the newspaper and it is the salacious detail that will sell it." When the *Daily Mirror* published photographs of the Duchess of York, *The Sun* felt that it had to produce tapes of Prince Charles. That sold the newspaper and enabled it to catch up with the *Daily Mirror*, whose circulation had risen because of the Duchess of York photographs. It is all about circulation wars, which is why other newspapers do not have the same problems.

I find it difficult to draft a law that would prevent the publication of salacious detail, which is why it must be done through a code of practice. It can be done through the way that I have previously suggested—and which I still think is basically right—of a statutory committee charged with the responsibility both to protect press freedom and roll back the laws that have invaded it and to balance the right of the individual.

We need to provide a statutory right to accuracy. The importance of accuracy in a reporting organisation was well highlighted in evidence to my committee—it raises a culture of accuracy which becomes entrenched in that organisation, so that editors and journalists are also required to look at the other detail of the story. That has worked well in television, which is why the regulated electronic media do better investigative journalism than the unregulated press, while tending generally—although not always—to respect people's rights. They have a culture of accuracy which spills over into other areas.

Presswise, the new organisation set up as a result of my Bill, met today for the third time. I was not able to attend, as I wanted to be here for this debate. Presswise exists to promote understanding of the press, but also to give advice, guidance and support to those who suddenly find themselves thrown into the front line before the press—the so-called ordinary person who finds himself the victim of press harassment or inaccuracy. It is similar to the victim support scheme referred to by the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon.

When I set up a committee to consider my Bill, I had many letters from people saying, "I don't want you to make my case public; I never again want to go through what the press has done to me." That is what made me aware of the need for a support and advice group for people caught in that trap and why I set up Presswise.

Lady Olga Maitland: I am interested in the hon. Gentleman's remarks about Presswise. How many people have sought its help?

Mr. Soley: It would be difficult to answer that question. Today is only the third meeting of Presswise. The first two were to set up the organisation. I have had a small number of letters and telephone calls that I am forwarding to Presswise. If this debate helps to publicise Presswise, that would be advantageous. We want to make known its activities. The National Association of Victim Support Schemes, among others, is offering to help. We are also looking for money to enable it to publish its activities and do all the other things that it needs to do.

Although I initiated the group as it initially worked through me and held meetings in the House, it is essentially run by people who have been victims. The chair is Linda Townley, who was involved in the Princess Anne letters case, and the secretary is Diana Simpson, who was alleged to be the lover of the Yorkshire Ripper. Most of the others

involved have also been victims. It is not for me to stay involved. I shall be supportive, but it must stand or fall on its own. I anticipate that it will stand on its own feet, but I hope that it gets the support of all those who understand the nature and extent of the problem.

The agenda is clear—we must have a clear defence of press freedom. I want that to go hand-in-hand with a Freedom of Information Act. There must be a regulatory body for the media, focusing primarily on accuracy so as to raise the culture of accuracy. There must be a high-status code operated by a high-status body. I am happy for the PCC to continue and for it to be the first point of referral, but there must be some statutory back-up, because at times it will fail and the statutory back-up will be needed, be it an ombudsman or the sort of structure that I have outlined and still prefer.

8.49 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): The House will understand if I do not try to match the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) in the weight or length of his contribution. I did not agree with all parts of his Bill, but through it he has done a service to the House and the country in allowing those who have suffered injustice—that is the proper word—at the hands of the media to have their point of view heard properly, not only through Presswise, about which the House will be interested to hear more as it develops, but through the hearings of the Select Committee. I join in the tributes to the Chairman of the Select Committee and to its members who have produced a fine report.

The last sentence in volume 3 on page 394 states:

"The job of pruning, then, is not for government but the press itself."

Those are sensible words by Dr. Leonard Sussman, who comes not from this country but from the United States. It is useful to have the words of someone from across the Atlantic. He also says:

"I believe the Calcutt recommendations for a statutory regime, listing 19 different requirements for a press complaints tribunal, moves in exactly the opposite and wrong direction. Indeed, it is far closer to the pattern now displayed in Eastern/Central Europe and Euroasia."

The Select Committee was right in saying that the statutory basis that Calcutt recommended for a tribunal is not the way in which the House or the country should proceed. I have my doubts about having any kind of statutory body. I recognise that the Select Committee proposes, in effect, an indirect ombudsman-type service which would be a last resort.

I do not want to get too far into my speech without recognising that broadcasters are not blameless. During my 18 years as a Member of Parliament, I have had no complaints from constituents about treatment by the press. I have had a complaint from a constituent about treatment by a television programme from a company that no longer has a broadcasting licence. That programme took what may have been a fact and a lot of tittle-tattle which was demonstrated later to be totally incorrect. My constituent in effect faced 50 accusations by television programme, one of which may have been accurate. He was prejudged by that television programme in a way which, if there had been a subsequent trial, would have been completely prejudicial.

I regret that people do not understand that if there is ambiguity in the way in which a story or person has been treated, or if it turns out that a broadcast programme or a press article has been wrong, the people responsible should write a letter immediately saying that they have got it wrong and asking how matters can be put right.

As we have heard from contributions made this evening, victims do not always want renewed publicity and may say that they do not want to hear any more about it or wish for only a small mention that does not refer to the original offensive broadcast or article.

I come now to some of the other evidence in the report. I do not want to spend my time again giving my views on press control. However, I would say through my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage that, if our right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster still has his list of 110 controls on the press, I am still waiting for a letter spelling out those extensive controls. They were not fully listed in the Select Committee's report.

I come now to some of the points in the report that should be better known. They are part of the fruits of the process that the members of the Select Committee brought forward. The Swedish agreement between the journalists, proprietors and editors is referred to on page 321. That says that there should be an undeniable public interest before there is an invasion of privacy, not just one that can be justified at some extreme. That is the kind of standard that it would not be unfair to ask people to set.

Page 331 of the report has evidence given by the police. I have a complaint about Scotland Yard's links with the press. On an increasing number of occasions they have tipped off journalists about juicy stories. I am not necessarily complaining about the press accompanying police on particular jobs, but the relationship is too incestuous. I hope that those in charge will look back over the past few years and ask whether there has been evidence of collusion, whether for friendship, money or favours in other ways.

It is difficult for a police department to work well with the press, but those in authority should be saying that there are standards and that they do not want to see excesses. There are times when individuals become the victims of press attention after the police have tipped off the press about things that may or may not be justifiable.

Page 388 contains annexes put forward by *The Sun*, which follow the evidence taken by the Select Committee from the Northern Ireland widows. Some of the most impressive evidence given to the Select Committee was from those widows, and I add my thanks to them for their courage in coming to discuss what they had experienced. It is worth noting also—I am not in any balancing their experience—the written evidence that was subsequently submitted by *The Sun* and the journalists working for it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) referred to discussions that he had had with senior people from News International. As a result of his talking bluntly to them, two or three days later it settled the libel case that had been brought on behalf of Her Majesty the Queen. Frank criticism of newspapers to their face can have an impact. Too often, we forget about using plain English.

I suspect that an increasing number of editors are paying attention to what their readers are saying to them, and in a way that others react to them. I heard a story recently of a mature woman who wrote to the editor of a broadsheet newspaper about his attacks on a leading individual. A couple of days later, she was somewhat

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surprised to have him telephone her. That is the kind of response about which one normally does not hear from newspapers, and I believe that it has some impact.

Sticking with *The Sun* for a moment, I am impressed at the evidence given by Tom Crone, the legal manager for News International, about the reduction of libel cases in which the company is involved. Perhaps News International is offending less, or perhaps it is getting out of holes faster.

That leads me on to the libel laws. It ought to be possible to bring a libel defamation case to a small claims court, where it is possible without major legal expense—possible without any legal expense—to get people in front of an impartial decision maker and hear the case on either side. That would be the simplest way of sorting out what might even have been an unintentional ambiguity, and the fastest way of forcing people to say to their managers in the world of newspapers and broadcasting, "I am being taken to the small claims court; what shall we do?"

When newspapers get things wrong, the faster they acknowledge it the better. Here I should declare an interest: my legal fees have been paid by parts of the media on a number of occasions. It is the newspapers' delay in accepting what they know that they must eventually accept that is so frustrating, expensive and intolerable to most ordinary people, as well as people like myself; indeed, in this context I regard myself as ordinary.

On page xliii in annex 5 to the report, the Committee corrected something that it had got slightly wrong; let me turn, however, to the underlying issue. If proprietors, editors and journalists, in their various collective ways, can commit themselves in public to the standards that they believe should properly apply to themselves, it will be far easier in debate and in broadcasting to pick up the serious issues on which they go wrong. I am impressed by the large number of articles appearing in local and regional newspapers—and even in the national press—which provoke no complaints. I wish that the standard of accuracy in political reporting were as good as the standard applying to the reporting of sports results, but perhaps constant pressure will achieve that.

Many of the complaints made by Women Against Rape and others who gave evidence to the Select Committee related to *The Daily Telegraph*, which seems to be willing to include details that it is no longer allowed to print in regard to divorce cases. I mention that because I want to refer to Conrad Black. Let us suppose that he, Rupert Murdoch or the owners of the Mirror Group could be told on a television programme—in general, debates about the press will take place on television and radio rather than in print—"This is the standard that you said that you would set"; "you" meaning the proprietor, on behalf of the editor responsible for the work of staff journalists or freelancers. I think that, in such circumstances, their people would not overstep the line quite so often—and, if they did so, they would recognise that they had done so, say sorry and return to the side of acceptability.

Finally, let me make a point about freelancers. I do not want to speak up for Kelvin MacKenzie too much, because I have had the occasional row with him; but I believed him when he said that he now requires freelance journalists to reach the standards set for staff journalists on *The Sun*. The problem relates to the freelance journalist who has not yet secured a newspaper to take his story and publish it.

I encountered a freelance journalist who claimed to be working for a well-known national newspaper. When I asked for that journalist's name, it was eventually given to me; when I checked with the agency to which the story was supposed to be going, I was told that it was a commissioned story, intended for an entirely different newspaper. When I rang the editor, he said that he had not asked for the story and would not take it. He said, "If you give me the telephone number of the agency, I will get in touch with the people there and tell them that they cannot do work for us unless they stop using such tactics."

Freelancers who work for agencies rely for most of their income on a reputation for reliability. It should be possible—in the various ways at which I have hinted, or in the ways referred to by others—to sort out more of the problems, without ever expecting to achieve the level of prior restraint at which no one ever gets anything wrong. Surely, part of the purpose of the press—the same applies to Members of Parliament—is to allow people to go out on a limb and to do or say things that appear unjustifiable at times; but they should be willing to admit when they have got it wrong.

9.2 pm

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): First, let me declare an interest, which must be unique in today's debate. I am not a member of the Select Committee; however, I have a particular interest. I am now a freelance journalist, and for 23 years I was a journalist employed by the *Sunday Express*.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): As a gossip columnist.

Lady Olga Maitland: I am proud to have been a columnist, although I did many other kinds of reporting.

Inevitably, some of my comments may be greeted with, "She would say that, wouldn't she?" But, in my position as gamekeeper-cum-poacher, I can see both sides of the coin. I think that this subject is important, because I accept that, in my role as Member of Parliament, I can no longer retain the privacy that I used to have.

I disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale), who feels that public people have a right to privacy. I believe that, where private lives conflict with public duties, newspapers are entirely justified in publishing the details. I do not accept, however, that they should publish the details of credit card accounts. The press should be guarantors of behaviour. There is a long list of corrupt politicians and business men in Italy, but who in the media ever wrote about them—or would not write about them? Anyway, the media did not write about them. That was a great mistake and a slur on Italy.

I hold no brief for unprofessionalism. I have always contended that good stories and scoops can be obtained through perfectly legitimate means and I also believe that they must be accurate. I support totally the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) in his endeavours to highlight the importance of accuracy. In the newsroom of the *Sunday Express* there used to be a slogan saying, "Make it early, make it accurate or make it up." Those days are now gone.

Time has moved on. There is a harsh competitiveness today which, combined with modern technology, gives newspapers the means to bug and probe without the subject's knowledge. That has created a nightmare scenario reminiscent of the worst of Stalin's secret service. It is a paradox that the modern technology that can be such a boon in our lives can also be such a bane. A new market of information based on modern invasive technology has now grown up and become a curse.

The press must accept responsibility. The press has enormous privileges and colossal power. I do not care for the arrogance that has been displayed in the press today, whether in the so-called quality papers or the tabloids, in their determination to dictate who runs the country. It is sordid and unacceptable. However, I would die for their right and freedom to publish as they think fit. I do not think that I have any right to censor that material, however unattractive and distasteful I may find it.

By and large, the public outcry about the excesses of recent years in the performance of the media, together with the searching debates that have taken place in the House —the Select Committee's report on privacy and intrusion, the private Member's Bill of the hon. Member for Hammersmith and the Calcutt report—have all served a positive purpose. I congratulate the hon. Member for Hammersmith. He may feel that I am not always in tune with him, but I am much closer to what he is trying to achieve than he may appreciate.

A point has been made and the Press Complaints Commission has got the message. It has responded in many ways to the Select Committee's recommendations. The reality is that Fleet street is running scared. Those on Fleet street know that the writing is on the wall. The threat of legislation to control their behaviour is like a gun to the head. It makes them think very clearly. They recognise that we are serious and that we have the power to cramp their style devastatingly. It is revealing that in the Select Committee's interview with Mr. Kelvin MacKenzie, who some people thought was a braggart, he explained why he did not publish the Camilla tapes in *The Sun*. He said:

"I could justify quite easily publishing those tapes in this country. We chose not to basically, I think, because we are in a curious cowed way at the moment in relation to the future of the press. I would not want to do anything which was going to cause us a bigger problem than we currently face".

That is a telling statement. Having made our point——

Mr. Gorst: It was a most telling statement, but if my hon. Friend had had the time and patience to read to us some of Mr. MacKenzie's other telling statements, it would have become clear that they told a different story.

Lady Olga Maitland: I accept that most of that interview with the Select Committee was not gratifying. Nevertheless, my hon. Friend must accept that even Mr. MacKenzie now knows that his peer group has developed different and higher standards and that, in the end, he will have to do likewise.

We have made our point, and it must be recognised that the press is responding. I am sorry that the progress made by the PCC was barely recognised by the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton). Since the hideous and intrusive journalism of the last year—whether it was dealing with the royal family or my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor)—I can safely say that there has been no repeat of abuses on that scale. A start has been made, but there is still some way to go.

I am told that Fleet street editors, interestingly enough, are now turning on each other with ferocity. Survival is all. They are determined that one of their number will not make them all go down with him. I have been given vivid descriptions of almost farcical behind-the-scenes scrapping at the PCC. The heat is on one Sunday newspaper over its management of a complaint by the police. I am told that peer group pressure is pretty ferocious. If no satisfaction is gained, the other editors will press the chairman of the newspaper group to sack the editor involved. I am told that they plan to go even further and use editorials in their own newspapers to shame the paper in question, saying that the editor is not fit to continue in the job. They will leave no stone unturned because they now know that if they do not put their house in order, others will do it for them.

As a consequence, there are stories floating around Fleet street about the private lives of public people which will never be published. Indeed, there is a story about the close relative of a former Cabinet Minister which will never see the light of day. Five years ago, that would not have been the case—the story would have been splashed across the headlines. Editors now know the penalties.

PCC meetings now last for four or five hours, with editors wrangling and discussing complaints. It must be said that on the public platform—for example, when he met us in the House—the PCC's chairman, Lord McGregor, gave a rather academic performance. However, I am told that, in private, he can tackle his editors firmly. He has their respect, and it must be said that he, too, has learnt from his mistakes.

Sir David English, the chairman and editor-in-chief of Associated Newspapers, which embraces the *Daily Mail* group, is as tough as hell, which is just as well given his present role as chairman of the PCC's code of practice committee. He would admit that, in the past, the Press Council was not a body that inspired fear in editors. Adjudications were conveniently buried on the back pages. When I worked for the *Sunday Express*, I did not take very seriously the threat of being taken to the Press Council. Today, Sir David recognises that the climate has changed. If he fails to deliver self-discipline, he knows that far worse will follow by way of legislation, which would be a very blunt instrument.

Over-reaction could cripple the free press which any democratic society must sustain as the guarantor of its freedoms. I understand that the Secretary of State has recognised that fact. A poodle press would be no use at all. I therefore trust that, whatever the Government propose in the White Paper, they are clear about what precisely they are trying to achieve. We should be building on the considerable self-regulation developments that have occurred. They were, admittedly, sluggish to begin with, but positive progress has been made in the last year.

The Government should not waste resources and effort setting up more bodies, such as a press commission, with its statutory ombudsman and different procedures and powers. It is suggested that the commission would deal with complaints and promote the freedom of the press, but it sounds like a recipe for total disaster. There would be procedural muddles galore, and a nightmare for aggrieved citizens, who would be expected to seek help from a body designed to protect and punish the press.

I would not argue against a press ombudsman to serve as a right of appeal; that could be a timely reminder to the PCC that its code of practice must be effective. But more

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thought must be given to the sort of powers that such a man should have. Swingeing and draconian powers with no right of appeal would devastate the press and make matters worse.

The code of practice covers public concerns quite well. It ranges from accuracy to the opportunity to reply, from innuendo to privacy, and in that connection I cite an example of the way in which the PCC has been effective. A constituent of mine is the sister of a man who was arrested as a suspect in connection with the Wimbledon murder. It transpired that there were no charges, and eventually he was released. But during that time, that man became headline news. Everything about him was splashed across the newspapers. All his personal affairs and his lifestyle were exposed. His family was identified and their names and addresses given. It was a humiliating experience for them.

The man was then set free by the police. There were no charges. The family complained to the PCC. The biggest apology appeared in *The Daily Mirror*. The second biggest apology appeared in *The Sun*. All the newspapers said much the same, although in slightly different ways. In other words, the PCC can be effective. All that happened in only the spring of this year.

The code of practice also takes on board misrepresentation, bugging and harassment. Sir David is constantly reviewing the code and is planning to update it. For example, with regard to harassment, it is intolerable that private citizens should be chased by doorsteppers or by people telephoning. Sir David is seeking a common agreement with Fleet street editors to pull reporters back to their offices if they fail after making two or three approaches. It is not an easy task dealing with Fleet street editors, who have a pugnacity all their own. It takes considerable coaxing and bullying to bring them into line.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Is there any justification for any journalist persisting in trying to make contact with somebody if that journalist has been told after the first attempt to go away?

Lady Olga Maitland: I agree with my hon. Friend that there is no excuse for harassment. I recall that when I worked in a news desk team, somebody might say in the first instance, "No, I don't think so," and then invite me in because he wanted to get whatever it was off his chest. But I agree with my hon. Friend that if somebody says no and means no, the reporter should withdraw. Up to now, the news desk would keep the reporter there and he has to carry on trying.

The PCC is now trying to get a code of behaviour agreed by all concerned. Progress is being made. The time is coming when we shall have to consider what real sanctions the PCC might have over and above peer group pressure. Perhaps we might consider offering compensation of up to £1,000 in clear-cut cases to successful complainants, thus avoiding Mickey Mouse figures. The money would come out of a common fund set up by the PCC, which in any case is funded by a levy on the whole of the newspaper industry.

I agree with the hon. Member for Hammersmith. Why should not the code of practice also include all those who work in the media and electronic broadcasting? Those shots on television of hacks outside a house are filmed by television cameras. Their invasive powers can be just as punishing. Why not go further, and extend the code to any citizen who seeks to sell material obtained by bugging, snooping or other illegitimate means? That would make it unlawful, for instance, to sell such things as the Camillagate tapes and the Squidgy tapes, thus putting the onus on both the vendor and the purchaser.

I ask the Secretary of State to accept that Fleet Street editors are not the mad dogs of war any more. Progress has been made in the last year, and it is significant that the PCC supports general legislation to deal with electronic bugging and snooping. It takes a positive line on the proposed laws on privacy—a quagmire, may I say, for definition.

I do not believe that a press commission would serve any useful purpose. It would be far better to beef up the self-regulatory powers of the PCC, which in any case is already carrying out the proposals that have been put forward for the press commission, particularly by having a board which is largely controlled by lay members.

There are so many thoughts to bear in mind, but I believe that we have given Fleet Street a big fright. Fleet Street knows that it can no longer continue in the way that it has in the past. The time has now come to say that it has had its chance and we want it to stiffen up its discipline. I believe that we can put more into the White paper to enable it to do that, but it would be a great tragedy if we ever went down the road of statutory control of the press, which is ultimately the guarantor of our freedom.

9.22 pm

Mr. John Whittingdale (Colchester, South and Maldon): My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) started her remarks by saying that she was in a minority in that she is not a member of the Select Committee. I am in an even smaller minority among those speaking in this debate, in that I am neither a member of the Select Committee nor a journalist. The reason why I want to contribute is that this is an issue about which I care very deeply.

As one who is a relative newcomer to the House, I have been impressed by the quality of the debate today. My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) talked about the confrontational nature of this Chamber and how the scoring of party political points was in our lifeblood. I do not think that there has been any party political point scoring at all in this debate, and it has been improved by that fact.

I am very pleased to see that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be replying this evening and that he has been present throughout the debate. He and I have worked together in the past, and I am very reassured by the fact that he will be responsible for taking the difficult and important decisions that will be required in relation to the topic that we are debating.

I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Mr. Sproat) is no longer present. I was very pleased by his appointment to the Government, not only because, like my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon), he is a fellow Essex man, but also because, in the short time that he was on the Back Benches after he returned to the House, he campaigned vigorously against the evils of Government regulation. I

fully supported him in that crusade, and I hope that he will continue it in his new office, not least with respect to the subject that we are debating today.

That is not to say, of course, that the press does not require regulation. The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) said that he hoped that all of us who contributed would make it clear that we accepted the need for the press to be regulated. I disagree with the hon. Member for Hammersmith about a great deal—I was one of only 12 Members who voted against the Second Reading of his Bill—but on this issue I am entirely happy to take up his invitation.

I accept that the press must be regulated. The press has great power and has a duty to exercise it responsibly. A code of conduct comprising well-defined guidelines is needed. That code would inform the press and allow it to be judged against those principles. Under the original Press Council there were no guidelines and, as a result, judgments by that council often appeared to be entirely arbitrary and unpredictable. That was bad for journalists, too, because they had no yardstick against which to measure their performance.

Undoubtedly, some journalists took advantage of that and overstepped the bounds of acceptable or ethical behaviour. That resulted in the setting up of the original committee on privacy under Sir David Calcutt. The committee rightly identified the need for the code of conduct. However, the committee—I believe rightly—originally rejected the establishment of a statutory body and gave the press 18 months to set its house in order. Yet despite the establishment of the Press Complaints Commission some, including the Calcutt committee, have concluded that the press failed in that task and that there is now a need for Government intervention. I do not accept that view, first, because the existing system can be made to work, and secondly, because the consequences of a statutorily appointed body could be far more dangerous and pose a greater threat to our liberty than could any failure or flaw within the present system.

Before becoming a Member of Parliament, I served for a time as a special adviser to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. At one time my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) held that position. I was in the Department when the Financial Services Act 1986 was going through the House. The Act established a system of regulation for the City and for the financial services industry. It came in the wake of some abuses, and at a time when the public were rightly demanding action to curb the behaviour of cowboys and crooks in the City. There was a great public demand for a statutory body to be created and for that body to have draconian powers enforceable in the courts.

It would have been easy to succumb to those pressures, but the Government rejected that course. Instead of creating a rigid structure operating inflexible rules, the Government felt it better to allow the City to regulate itself. Several supervisory bodies were created with flexible rules that could be applied, not only to the letter but interpreted to reflect the spirit which lay behind them.

By refraining from enshrining those rules in legislation, the Government allowed the self-regulatory organisations to adapt their rules to take account of developments in technology. The SROs had powers to tackle new abuses and close the loopholes that inevitably appeared. It was also recognised that it was in the City's own interests to make self-regulation work and be seen to work if a statutory body was to be avoided. I remain convinced that that was the correct course.

Those same arguments carry equal weight for regulation of the press today. But there is another and more powerful argument against a system of statutory regulation such as that proposed by the hon. Member for Hammersmith in his Bill and by the Calcutt review. As has been said many times in the debate, a free press is a bulwark of democracy. It is essential that the press should be able to criticise the Government and members of the Government and to feel no restraint in doing so. I suspect that anyone looking at today's newspapers would conclude that the press feels no such restraint at the moment and is taking maximum advantage of that freedom.

A statutory body appointed by the Government to rule upon what the press can and cannot print would inevitably be a restraint upon that freedom. I have every confidence that, if such an authority were to be created and its members appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage, it would be entirely objective and would not dream of using its position in any way for party political motives.

I have equal confidence that if a Labour Secretary of State were to appoint members to a body, the same would apply. but in many countries and Governments the commitment to parliamentary democratic government is less wholehearted. This country and its Parliament are rightly regarded as beacons of democracy. If we were to have Government intervention in the press here, it is an example which would be eagerly followed by those with far less worthy motives.

In its submission to the Calcutt review, the Australian Press Council said that the very motivation of its submission was

"the fear that any recommendation of the Review for the statutory regulation of thhe press ... would be of precedential value to governments throughout the commonwealth and beyond, in particular those where the press is less than free. This would be particularly so in those countries emerging from dictatorship, where a new legal system is not yet entrenched and where a free press is still a novelty."

I therefore remain a strong supporter of self-regulation.

After the publication of Sir David Calcutt's first report, the press responded speedily, spurred on undoubtedly by the threat that accompanied it of Government intervention. The establishment of the Press Complaints Commission within six months of the report, with the creation of the Press Standards Board of Finance to fund it and the drawing up of a detailed code of conduct to guide it, was impressive.

The Press Complaints Commission has been subjected to quite a lot of criticism in the debate, some of it justified. But I welcomed the contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam in defending some of the things that the commission has done, because I believe that it has done its best to respond to the complaints that have been made and to strengthen its code of conduct.

As hon. Members have pointed out, the commission has already accepted a number of recommendations in the Select Committee's report, such as setting up a helpline for members of the public and changing its membership so that lay members are now in the majority. Those were specific and very sensible recommendations of the Select Committee and I think that they will lead to a substantial improvement in the self-regulatory regime. However, I

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hope that the commission will also consider some further changes, some of which have also been advocated by the Select Committee.

Some of the most recent cases of press stories relating to public figures, especially members of the royal family, have rightly led to great public concern. In most cases, but by no means all, I accept the commission's comment that a tenable case for their publication can be argued, but the manner in which some of the stories have been obtained and the way in which they have been embroidered with lurid and tendentious detail is unacceptable. I therefore regret that the commission has not always felt able to comment and rule upon some of these aspects.

I understand that it is much more difficult for the commission if it has not actually received a complaint from any of the parties involved, even when it has gone out of its way to invite such a complaint, but it is understandable that in some of the cases the individuals involved should not wish to complain because to do so would simply prolong their ordeal. I do not think that in these cases the commission should then ignore the story and the issue that it raises.

On occasions the commission has felt able to make public comment without there being a complaint from the parties involved. In particular, it quickly and quite rightly condemned the publication of the Camillagate tapes. I hope that in future it will continue to speak out in condemnation of flagrant breaches of its code of conduct without waiting first to receive complaints.

There is also a suspicion in the public mind that not all editors agree with the view expressed by the commission in its submission to Calcutt that

"a critical adjudication by the PCC is seen as a serious failure".

Instead, there is a feeling that editors in a highly competitive market and under pressure to boost circulation would regard an adverse ruling by the PCC as a small price to pay for the sale of an extra 100,000 or 200,000 copies. The commission stated in its submission that it

"does not wield and will not seek enforceable sanctions . . . our powers are as weak or as strong as the moral commitment accepted openly by the newspaper and periodical industry under the Government's threat of statutory intervention."

It is that moral commitment which, rightly or wrongly, some people now doubt. I hope, therefore, that the PCC will consider taking stronger powers than it has now.

Since the motivation of editors is to sell newspapers and make profits for their proprietors, I agree that the commission should have the power to punish transgressions of its code in this area. I support the recommendation of the Select Committee that the commission should be able to impose fines and order the payment of compensation. Indeed, I would go slightly further: in extreme cases, as an ultimate sanction, the commission might be able to order that a newspaper that had blatantly disregarded its code should suspend publication for one edition. That would be not only financially punitive but highly visible to the public.

If the commission followed these recommendations, it would become a body that would still command the support of the newspaper industry, but it would also possess the necessary teeth. I should hope that there would be no need for further regulation, such as the statutory ombudsman proposed by the Select Committee. While marginally preferable to the statutory commission which some have advocated, such a post would still be in the gift of the Government and it would still carry with it the dangers that I have described.

Select Committee members who have spoken in the debate have stressed that they hope that the position will become a sinecure—that it would never require use—but there must be a danger, however small, that an ombudsman could become a state-appointed newspaper censor, and the commission would either have to become subservient to it or irrelevant and ignored.

The commission made several other recommendations with implications that go far beyond the press. It recommended the protection of privacy law. There is a strong case for that, but I share the view of those who have said that such a law must not simply be directed at the press. It must apply to everyone in the country and not be seen as an instrument to punish journalists.

Similarly, I should like to mention the laws of libel, which also need to be reviewed. The Prime Minister was absolutely right to initiate proceedings against the *New Statesman and Society* following publication of the outrageous and scurrilous story in that periodical. I am not sure, however, that it was right that the printing firm that printed the magazine—it is based in Colchester—should also have had to pay. It seems unreasonable to expect commercial printers to take responsibility for every word of every newspaper, book or magazine that they print. I hope that that will be considered when we come to look at the law in this area.

This subject generates strong feelings because it touches on one of the fundamental components of a free society. We should think carefully before doing anything to interfere with the freedom of the press. I welcome the recommendations in the Select Committee report. I do not entirely accept one or two of them, but generally they are extremely sensible and they would improve the present regime of self-regulation. I hope that when my right hon. Friend comes to make his decisions he will conclude that the regulation of the press is a matter best left to the press and that there will be no need for the Department to introduce legislation.

9.38 pm

The Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Peter Brooke): This speech is being made at an hour when my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) told us it is impossible for anyone to say anything new. It will be a mixture of an initial response to the Select Committee and a wind-up to the debate on behalf of the Government.

I congratulate the National Heritage Select Committee on its successful application for this estimates day debate, which gives the House another opportunity to discuss the important questions of press regulation and protection of privacy against media intrusion. Except for a moment during the speech of the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), I have had the pleasure of hearing every word of the debate. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, North (Mr. Gorst), who has sat here throughout the debate without granting himself the indulgence of making a speech.

The debate has had the virtue of being wholly comprehensible to the Public Gallery. I do not know about

other hon. Members, but I have found that even English-speaking foreign visitors often think our affairs here as incomprehensible as cricket; but on this occasion we have been talking about a subject which would be comprehensible in any land.

The Select Committee report was published on 24 March, much of it in direct response to Sir David Calcutt's review of press self-regulation, which he submitted to me in January. The Government welcome the Select Committee's report as a distinguished contribution to the public debate on these exceptionally difficult issues. Governments should normally seek to respond to Select Committee reports within two months, and I regret that it has not been possible to do so on this occasion.

I have written to the Chairman of the Committee, the right hon. Member for Manchester Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), to apologise for this and to explain the reasons. They are, quite simply, that the political range and importance of the Committee's recommendations, many going beyond the responsibilities of my Department, made a response within the normal timetable impossible. I assured the right hon. Gentleman, as I now assure the House, that the Government will do their best to ensure that their response is published before the summer Recess.

We envisage a White Paper which, as well as responding to the Select Committee's recommendations, will set out the Government's final views on press self-regulation and report progress on those recommendations in Sir David Calcutt's review which, as I told the House in my statement on 14 January, the Government are able to accept.

Although it is not possible for me at this moment to set out the Government's final views on any of these matters, I assure the right hon. Gentleman and the House that I have listened to the debate carefully and that the Government will take full account of the points raised when we come to take decisions. I shall pick up some of the points addressed to the Government a little later, but, before I deal with the Select Committee's report, I shall set out briefly the Government's perspective on press regulation and self-regulation.

The conflict between the freedom of the press to report and comment on matters of current interest and the rights and claims of individuals to be left alone is an old one, as students of the very vigorous press in the 18th and 19th centuries know well. But it is really only since the last war that the question whether, and if so how, the press should be regulated has become a hardy perennial.

Successive royal commissions generally concluded that self-regulation was the best form of restraint. In this, they were following the long-established tradition of not seeking to involve the Government in restraining or controlling the content of the printed press, except in so far as the general law—whether it be the law on defamation, incitement to crime or court reporting restrictions—imposed limits. At the same time, the commissions generally concluded that self-regulation had not been fully effective.

More recently, that was also the conclusion of the privacy committee, under Sir David Calcutt's chairmanship, and of Sir David's own review of press self-regulation, published in January. As hon. Members will know from the statement that I made to the House on 14 January, the Government accepted Sir David's conclusion that self-regulation under the Press Complaints Commission was not working properly, and urged the newspaper industry to give attention to the failings that he had identified. We also accepted the case for new criminal offences of unwarranted intrusion, and for giving consideration to four other measures bearing on privacy. But we made it clear that we would be very reluctant to accept Sir David's central recommendation for a statutory press complaints tribunal, which would be a step of considerable constitutional significance, and we reserved our position on that. That remains the position, and we will report our conclusions on the tribunal in our response to the Select Committee.

We are also considering the recommendations that the Select Committee has directed at the Government. As I have said, some of these go rather beyond my Department, but we will reply to them all in our response to the Committee. About half the Committee's recommendations are directed at the newspaper industry, which is also considering them. As hon. Members will know, both the Press Complaints Commission, and the Press Standards Board of Finance Ltd—Pressbof—which funds the commission, issued statements on 4 May setting out their responses to some of the recommendations for better self-regulation which had been advanced by Sir David Calcutt and the Select Committee.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister welcomed those changes at the time, adding that the Government would keep a close eye on their implementation. No doubt both bodies are considering the merits of implementing the remaining recommendations. Our response to the Committee will take into account the totality of the industry's response to the recommendations contained in the two reports.

In the stimulating debate that we have just heard, hon. Members repeatedly asked for the Government's views on the Committee's various recommendations—with engaging patience about when we might be able to provide them. I do not want to anticipate the Government's response to the Committee, on which hon. Members will have to be patient a little longer. However, I should like to consider the debate that we have had before making one or two general remarks about the report.

The right hon. Member for Gorton made a speech that was elegant, thorough and magisterial—adjectives which are also capable of being used about the Select Committee's report, even if they are not necessarily the words that leader writers used on the report's publication. The House will be grateful to him for the way in which he took us through the report of the Committee which he had so skilfully piloted. He gave us an insight into his advice to Lord Wilson to stop reading newspapers. I do not think that that advice would have been accepted by the first Earl Attlee, who relied on newspapers for reliable accounts of county cricket matches, as I do.

The right hon. Gentleman believes that the Select Committee's recommendations have prompted the press concessions. We cannot make a conclusion one way or the other. I have a personal preference for the ancient Chinese view that one gets more done in the world if one does not mind who receives the credit. The important fact is that the press has responded to the public concern evidenced in pluralist ways.

In a measured and thoughtful speech, my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) asked about the timing of any announcement by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. I have sought to verify the answer during the debate, but I

[Mr. Peter Brooke]

can only say that my best understanding is that he intends, as we do in our own response to the report, to bring his work before the House before the recess.

In a colourful and energetic speech, the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) made a passing reference to the Stasi. He is not here, so I cannot ask him whether he knows the joke about the Stasi. When their function as police in east Berlin came to an end, they all became taxi drivers. They were the best in the world as all one had to do was give them one's name and they automatically knew one's address. The hon. Gentleman recommended all-party action. There has been near-unanimity in the debate. If Parliament legislates, there is much to be said for it to do so on the basis of all-party support.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn) made an uplifting speech. He said that any sober critic would say that the press was slipping. It is most important that that view should be rationally buttressed in order to carry conviction in any legislative action that might arise.

The hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) was a little more partisan. My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) described it as an attacking speech. I found it not so much attacking as familiar—a comfortable old friend whose sampler stitch aphorisms I could now repeat in my sleep. I caught her saying that the Conservative party is against freedom of information and likewise heard her going on to say—and I paraphrase—that contempt for democracy marched hand in hand with a disrespect for freedom of information—the dying fall of implication being that the Conservative party is contemptuous of democracy.

During the Committee stage of the Bill of the hon. Member for Hammersmith, I cited the occasion when Professor Joad—not then a professor—went to take a scholarship at Oxford and was asked to write for three hours on the question: can a good man be happy on the rack? To which he replied, if he was a very good man and it was a very bad rack, yes; if not, no. He was awarded a capital alpha for his answer. I would have found the hon. Member for Cynon Valley a little more convincing if, when she described the Government and thus implicitly, myself, as secretive and authoritarian, she had not already included the editor of *The Sun* in a group that she categorised as well-trained sheep. I commend to her the editor's evidence to the Select Committee.

My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham made a compassionate speech and said that he regretted that the hon. Lady had introduced a discordant note into the atmosphere of unanimity which had been reflected in the Select Committee report. Given the elaborate investigatorial and legislative programme she spelled out in a somewhat premature version of the Queen's speech, I can see her difficulties.

The hon. Lady's note of dissent was matched by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) who, in an appropriately austere and discriminating speech, after paying tribute to the Select Committee, raised probing misgivings about the statutory Ombudsman. The hon. Gentleman and I were contemporaries at Oxford with the Master of the Rolls whose views on the entrenchment of article 10 of the European convention on human rights has necessarily made a personal impact on me which I shall need to debate with him outside the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) made a reflective speech on a wide range of aspects of the Select Committee's findings. Although he correctly quoted the observation about the Englishman's castle, the original source of that stated fortification is Sir Edward Coke, the great lawyer of his age, who did not specify an Englishman but happily took a more generally Unionist view.

The hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Davies) made a self-confessedly generalist speech and in the process reinforced the view that anti-surveillance legislation should be generally rather than narrowly framed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North made a characteristically robust, wide-ranging and individual speech which in its coverage and vigour will bear retrospective re-reading. He personally introduced me to a ringing quotation by John Stuart Mill, who was a former Member of Parliament for part of my constituency, although for a party other than my own.

When I made a statement on 14 January at the time of the publication of the Calcutt report, I said that we would delay our full response to Calcutt, not only until after the Select Committee had reported, but until after the debate on the Bill of the hon. Member for Hammersmith had run its course.

I express appreciation to the hon. gentleman for the contribution his Bill has made to our general deliberations. I served as the Minister in the Standing Committee. That was an unusual innovation and, in the absence of a Government Whip, it reminded me how much I had forgotten about the detailed conduct of a Bill since I left the Whips' Office 10 years ago, not least because of the way that he arranged the evidence to be taken at the prefatory hearings prior to the Second Reading of his Bill.

The hon. Gentleman has turned himself into an one-man Select Committee. He has on these subjects become, if I may coin a phrase, a personal walking appendix. He raised the historic inadequacy of the Police Complaints Commission. He will remember the failings that Sir David Calcutt identified and there is virtue in comparing how many of those criticisms Pressbof has responded to. His speech demonstrated the continuing interest he will take in the subject even when the summer is over.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) quoted Doctor Leonard Sussman, whom the chairman of the Select Committee had quoted at the end of the opening speech of the debate. My hon. Friend's speech, which was tautly relevant to the report, was also informed by his own personal experiences at the hands of the press.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) brought a different aspect of personal experience to the debate which helped to illuminate it from a different perspective. Indeed, all those who have spoken from a vantage point outside the Select Committee have added to our understanding.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Whittingdale) for his personal remarks. I shall tell my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Mr. Sproat) what my hon. Friend said. We have only two Ministers in our Department and the other half

of the ministerial team is dining for the heritage tonight. I can assure my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon that my hon. Friend's passion for deregulation has not deserted him. It was good of my hon. Friend to take part in the debate without either membership of the Select Committee or the journalists' profession and the debate has gained in the process.

I said that I would conclude with a remark about the report. In its opening paragraphs, the Select Committee report seems to me to expose admirably the dilemma facing a democratic society which has to balance the right of freedom of expression with other rights. Of the other rights, privacy is not the only one, though it is probably the most important one, and it is certainly the one whose abuse by the press has caused the most concern recently among the public and in the House.

As the report says, the right to privacy must not be exploited to withhold information necessary for making democratic judgments; nor must it be ignored by those whose main interest is in providing a saucy story.

The Select Committee has been at pains to take and publish evidence from those claiming that their private lives have been harmed by injudicious, thoughtless or malicious reporting. I am sure that the House is grateful to the Committee for bringing those cases to its attention.

Whether the Committee's prescription for correcting press abuses is appropriate is another matter to which the Government will return in our response. I assure the House that meanwhile, in developing our policy we shall be concerned solely with seeking the best means by which to restrain abuses of press freedom and by which to achieve a proper balance between the often conflicting rights of freedom of the press and the rights of individuals.

The press argues that parliamentarians are preoccupied with defending themselves and that editors cannot identify a wider public concern about their behaviour. The freedom of the press becomes a talisman which is, at one and the same time, the covenant within the ark and the justification for all actions that the press may take. Parliamentarians have their own reasons for wishing the freedom of the press to be maintained. Our forebears in the House sought to create, to enlarge and to sustain that freedom; it is one of our national glories.

The press periodically becomes apprehensive that Parliament is about to interfere with that freedom in greater or lesser degree, and the events of this year have embraced such a period. But I think it reasonable for Parliament to remark that the press is not serving the interests of freedom if it automatically, even casually and dismissively, uses the amulet of press freedom to justify whatever action it takes, especially when individual privacy is invaded.

9.55 pm

Mr. Kaufman: By leave of the House, I shall reply briefly. This debate will be read for many years to come, so may I first clarify a remark made by the Secretary of State about Lord Attlee's newspaper-reading habits? Lord Attlee read only two newspapers: the *Daily Herald* out of loyalty and *The Times* for the cricket scores. He otherwise paid no attention to what any newspaper said. He stayed in office for six years, and was a great and constructive Prime Minister. I once again recommend his practice to the present Prime Minister and to any of his successors in the remote future.

The Secretary of State need not have apologised in his comprehensive winding-up speech for not responding speedily to the Select Committee report. We on the Committee would far rather that the Government listened before acting. I and, I am sure, all my colleagues on the Select Committee are grateful for the fact that the Secretary of State has listened, has been here throughout the debate and has paid most serious attention to what has been said.

The Secretary of State said that the Government will take into account the totality of the response from the press before making up their mind about their course of action. That is satisfactory, and well and good. However, although that attitude is perfectly proper and appropriate, it must be taken into account, as has been acknowledged by many participants in this excellent debate, that in so far as progress has been made by the press in voluntary regulation, it has been made in anticipation of action being taken to the extent that the press itself does not take action.

Furthermore, my view is that if we have gone as far as we have, with the Government considering the matter carefully, with the Calcutt report, with Bills promoted by my hon. Friends the Members for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) and for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher), and with our Select Committee report, and no action is taken, the press will slide backwards in the belief that it has got through its crisis and that it is now all clear for it to return to some of the deeply objectionable ways from which, we hope, it is beginning to emerge.

I say to the Secretary of State and to the House that our Select Committee remains active on the matter. The Committee will, if necessary, return to the matter in the present Parliament, depending on the way in which the press decides to accept the spirit of the country and the spirit of the House. There is no doubt that there must be action and that that action should include not only greatly enhanced voluntary regulation by the press, but action of the kind that we suggest to the Government in our report. The House is ready for that action; the House is ready for the Government's announcement, to which we look forward.

It being Ten o'clock, MADAM SPEAKER *proceeded to put forthwith the Question which she was directed by paragraph (7) of Standing Order No. 19 (Consideration of Estimates) to put at that hour.*

Resolved,

That a sum not exceeding £26,720,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges that will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1994 for expenditure by the Department of National Heritage and the Royal Fine Arts Commission on administration.

Statutory Instruments, &c

Madam Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

DOUBLE TAXATION

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Ghana) Order 1993 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 26th April.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (India) Order 1993 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 26th April.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Ukraine) Order 1993 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 26th April.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Uganda) Order 1993 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 26th April.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

Question agreed to.

REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE BILL

Ordered,

That, in respect of the Representation of the People Bill, notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bill has been read a second time.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

BROADCASTING

Ordered,

That Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory be discharged from the Broadcasting Committee and Mr. Greg Knight be added to the Committee. *[Mr. Conway.]*

FINANCE AND SERVICES

Ordered,

That Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory be discharged from the Finance and Services Committee and Mr. Greg Knight be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

Air Pollution

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

10 pm

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): I thank the House for the opportunity to raise this pertinent and topical subject at a time when there is widespread concern about pollution levels, especially in London. We are accustomed to alarming stories about pollution in Mexico, Los Angeles and Athens, but the popular mythology was that Britain had cracked it—we had pioneered clean air legislation, and the industrial grime and the killer smog of the 1950s were no more. However, today we face even more dangerous pollutants in the air that we breathe—pollutants that we often cannot see but which can cause a variety of symptoms, including hay fever, eczema and asthma, especially among children, but which are also responsible for various forms of cancer.

In Britain, we pride ourselves on having introduced air quality measures and on adopting standards set by the European Community and the World Health Organisation, but this week both EC regulations and WHO guidelines have been breached. Last week the Environment Minister launched a new Government air quality information service. I took the opportunity to dial Freephone 0800-556677. I was told that air quality was good in all parts of Britain except London and the south of England. I was advised that, if I was asthmatic, I should increase my treatment or talk to my doctor. Callers were advised to avoid exercise and to withdraw their children from games at school.

The message went on to say that we could all play our part. It suggested that a major cause of much of the pollution was exhaust fumes from cars and lorries. Its advice was that we should not have bonfires, not drive too fast and not brake too sharply or accelerate too rapidly. While I am sure that those measures may help, they will have only a marginal impact. There is much more direct and dramatic action that the Government could and should take to stop London and other parts of the country choking to death.

The Government acknowledge that there are regular breaches of EC NO_2 guidelines. In the 1991 White Paper, they recognised that the only way to reverse the trend of rising pollution levels was to reduce the amount of vehicular traffic, yet they continue with policies that are anti-public transport and encourage more road use. Britain has more vehicles for every mile of road than any other EC country with the exception of Italy, yet the Government continue with a policy of substantial road building while failing to sustain adequate investment in public transport.

When the President of the Board of Trade was Secretary of State for the Environment, he acknowledged that

"for all the personal mobility the car can bring, we must be aware of the debit side."

He told the Institution of Civil Engineers that the car was a major contributor of oxides of nitrogen and carbon monoxide, which he described as being harmful to human health and the environment. He faced fierce opposition from some of his colleagues. The former Secretary of State for Transport, Nicholas Ridley, said in 1984:

"If people want to commute into London, who am I to say they shouldn't?"

To him, it was a question of consumer choice.

Nicholas Ridley's successor, Cecil Parkinson, felt that people's aspirations to use a car should not be "artificially constrained". But leaving aside the question of constraints, why do the Government adopt a policy of positively encouraging the growth in the use of private motor cars? Why do they have a policy that encourages the transport of freight by road rather than by rail or water? Why do they not recognise that any measures aimed at reducing car usage must provide more attractive alternative forms of transport?

In November 1992, when London Transport's investment programme was cut by one third, the roads programme remained intact. It was not someone from the Opposition Benches or from the environmental lobby who said:

"A demand-led approach begins by building a six lane motorway, in a few years moves to an eight lane motorway and not long afterwards, as is the case with junctions 12 to 15 of the M25, a 14 lane motorway."

It was a true blue Tory. It was the then hon. Member for Surrey, East.

In the five years from 1986 to 1991, NO_2 levels in the United Kingdom rose by 35 per cent. In the same period, emissions of oxides of nitrogen from motor vehicles rose by 38 per cent. In the Warren Spring laboratory survey in 1991, 107 sites in the United Kingdom exceeded the EC guide value for NO_2 and, of course, of the 20 sites with the highest concentration, 17 were in London.

Successive studies have shown that London and the surrounding areas have higher NO_2 concentrations than the rest of the country. But while central London suffers greatly, there are other areas of concern previously thought to be safe leafy suburbs. For example, Addlestone in Surrey, located close to the M25, had the largest increase between 1986 and 1991, rising by almost 100 per cent.

Warren Spring laboratory predicts that the use of catalytic converters on new cars will reduce NO_2 levels for a short period only, but they are predicted to rise again with the expected growth in traffic.

I understand that a decision has been made today by the President of the Board of Trade to amalgamate the Warren Spring laboratory with the Atomic Energy Authority at Harwell. I hope the Minister will comment on the alleged leaked document which claims that the decision had already been taken to divide the work between the

I seek an assurance from the Minister tonight that that action and decision by the Department of Trade will not jeopardise the national air quality monitoring network which Warren Spring runs. Will he tell us whether the Secretary of State for the Environment, or his predecessor, the current Home Secretary, were consulted on the matter by the President of the Board of Trade? I suspect that the intention is to save money and fatten up Harwell for privatisation.

In central London, nitrogen oxide levels are almost at the EC limit value, and way above the EC guide value for which EC countries are supposed to aim. In December 1991, the average concentration of nitrogen dioxide in London was more than double the World Health Organisation's guidelines. We know that exposure to NO_2 causes lung irritation, bronchitis and pneumonia and increased susceptibility to viral infections. Like sulphur dioxide, it is a constituent of smog and a cause of acid rain.

Carbon monoxide is another danger, most of which is attributable to vehicle exhausts from petrol engines. Already in London there have been occasions when the levels have reached double the WHO guidelines and the Government's own predictions are that, nationally, transport carbon emissions will rise from 38 million tonnes in 1990 to 62 million tonnes by 2010.

One of the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning is drowsiness, impaired brain functioning, slow reflexes and impaired perception and thinking. I wonder whether the Government's inaction in dealing with the problem may be attributable to a dose of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Ozone is another pollutant on the increase. This is a secondary pollutant formed when nitrogen oxides mix with hydrocarbons from vehicle exhausts in the presence of sunlight—the infamous photochemical smog. But although ozone is beneficial in the upper zone, where it shields us from harmful ultra-violet and other rays, at ground level it is a dangerous toxin, causing lung irritation, eye, nose and throat irritations and headaches.

To this lethal mixture have to be added hydrocarbons themselves, a third of which are directly attributable to motor vehicles. Emissions of hydrocarbons from transport sources rose by 60 per cent. between 1979 and 1988 and one of those hydrocarbons, benzine, is a dangerous carcinogen for which there is no safe limit. Benzine levels in London currently pose a threat to human health.

Monitoring the situation is not an end in itself, but it should be used by Government to define the measures that need to be taken to improve air quality. It should also be used as a basis for making decisions in planning and transport. Britain, however, has fewer stations to monitor nitrogen dioxide in compliance with EC directives than any other EC country except Ireland and Luxembourg. Last year, the Government announced plans to increase the number of stations in its advanced urban monitoring network to 24, which compares with 200 in Germany and more than 85 in France.

Another important factor is location. In 1990, London Scientific Services made the criticism that the Department of the Environment was not complying with the EC directive. Monitoring sites should be where pollution is likely to be highest, yet none of the United Kingdom sites is at the roadside, where concentrations of nitrogen dioxide are usually at their highest. Since the abolition of the GLC, monitoring in London has been haphazard. I admit that cost can be a major obstacle to effective local authority monitoring; that is not just my view, but the view expressed recently by the Conservative Local Authority Association for London.

The London Boroughs Association and the Association of London Authorities are co-operating with the South East Thames Institute of Public Health in presenting proposals for London wide air pollution monitoring. I must add that I consider the letter sent by Lord Strathclyde to the institute a regrettably negative response to a positive suggestion.

Above all, we need straight factual information, open government and honesty from Ministers. Air quality is defined in the bulletins as very good, good, poor or very poor. The National Society for Clean Air has criticised those categories, on the ground that the jump across the boundary from good to poor is too sudden; it has suggested four bands—good, moderate, poor and very poor. Under the present classification, the "good" category allows up to 100 parts per billion of ozone,

[Mr. John Austin-Walker]

whereas the World Health Organisation recommends a maximum one-hour guideline of 76 to 100 parts per billion. As the National Society for Clean Air has said: "to describe ozone levels approaching 100 parts per billion as good surely requires the use of rose-tinted spectacles."

In response to criticisms from Friends of the Earth, the hon. Member for Loughborough, then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, said:

"WHO has set guidelines which are intended to be levels above which action should be taken to reduce pollution. They are not indications of a health risk as they incorporate safety margins".

The World Health Organisation, however, says:

"Since the air quality guideline value incorporates little or no margin of protection, widespread acute effects of the respiratory tract may be caused. The frequent and repetitive nature of ozone exposure might contribute to the development of irreversible decline of lung function as well as to structural lung damage".

The WHO guidelines are frequently exceeded in the United Kingdom. Does the Minister stand by the remarks made by the former Health Minister, or will he now tell the truth? That would indeed be a breath of fresh air.

It must be recognised that pollutants have different effects on different people. What may be reasonably safe for a healthy adult may have catastrophic consequences for a young baby or a frail elderly person; levels of atmospheric pollution that may cause the average person little discomfort can be crippling for someone with asthma or some other respiratory condition. There is also the question of the synergistic effect—the effect of different compounds acting together. I believe scientists call it the "potentiation factor": relatively low levels of some toxic substances act, in the presence of others, with increased toxicity.

Day by day, we are learning more about the harmful effects. What may have been regarded as safe levels five or 10 years ago are now known to be harmful, so we must be somewhat circumspect when people talk about safe levels. A group of toxins that I have not mentioned is that comprising the dioxins, furans and polychlorinated biphenyls, many of which come from the incineration of domestic waste.

I have not time to go into the subject tonight, but I draw the Minister's attention to the evidence given by Dr. Dean, the director of public health in the Cory inquiry, which will shortly be on his desk. She quoted Professor Bridges' study, which said that chlorine compounds can be transferred by the placenta to the developing foetus and through breast milk to the new-born child at 100 to 200 times the body concentration of the mother. That is a salutary piece of information, which we should bear in mind when talking about safe and acceptable levels of pollution.

I represent a constituency with a higher than average level of respiratory illness and asthma among children. Also, a school in Abbey Wood in my constituency was featured in the BBC television programme "First Sight". That programme pointed out the serious consequences of asthma and respiratory illness for the children of that school. Ten per cent. of the pupils are regularly on medication which has to be on supply in the school, yet, in that area with such high levels of respiratory illness, the Government plan to build the east London river crossing, contributing another 1,000 metric tonnes of gaseous and particulate pollution into the area. It will pass by eight schools, five of which cater for special education and health needs, including children with asthma, cystic fibrosis and heart disease. I invite the Minister to come to Greenwood school to see the consequences on those children of the Government's road building programme.

We need action from the Government. We need better monitoring and information. We need to develop technical solutions to pollution emissions. Above all, we need to reduce traffic levels and improve public transport. We need to introduce fiscal measures that encourage public transport use and discourage the use of private cars. Above all, we need land use and planning policies to reduce to a minimum the need to travel. We need the Government to set targets. If they can set targets to reduce road casualties, they can and should set targets for reducing traffic and pollution, which is choking not only this capital city but other cities up and down the country.

10.15 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): I welcome the initiative of the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker) in raising this issue. Air pollution and health are important matters.

We consider air pollution very seriously. Considerable progress has been made since the London smogs of the 1950s, but there are now different problems to solve. The measures we take must be well targeted and follow from a full understanding of air pollution.

The nature of air pollution has changed dramatically over the years. In the 1950s, there were severe smogs in London and elsewhere, and these had a considerable impact on health. Such smogs arose mainly from pollution from coal being burnt in homes, offices and factories. The Clean Air Acts have made such smogs episodes of history.

The main pollutants of concern today are those from road transport: nitrogen dioxides and hydrocarbon gases. In the presence of bright sunshine, such as we have experienced recently, those pollutants create photochemical oxidants, which at high levels may exacerbate respiratory problems for some people.

Levels of such pollutants have been rising in cities throughout Europe as road transport activity has increased. It is important to recognise that London is not Athens or Los Angeles. Air quality in London is good or very good 97 per cent. of the time.

In the environmental White Paper, "This Common Inheritance", we made clear our intention that action on air quality should be based increasingly on the acceptable standards for the protection of health and the wider environment. We want to ensure development of air quality standards, the provision of public information and the integration of air quality standards and pollution control, based on good scientific research; effective monitoring; and firm abatement policies.

The technical complexity of air pollution makes it essential that we have the clearest possible understanding of air pollutants and of the way emissions are transported and transformed in the atmosphere, and of the way in which they impact on health. So we have a large research programme working on air pollution and its effects. The announcement today by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade will in no way compromise that research programme.

Levels of pollution in our towns and cities are subject to review by an independent body, the quality of urban air review group, which is chaired by an eminent air pollution scientist. The review group's first report was published in January 1993. The report contains an assessment of current levels of air pollution and advice on what further research might be required.

To provide advice on the impact of current levels of air pollution we have established an expert committee as an advisory group on the medical effects of air pollutants. The advisory group has published reports on ozone and on sulphur dioxide, acid aerosols and particulates. In addition, a working group has been established on the possible effects of air pollutants on allergic diseases, under the auspices of the British society for allergy and clinical immunology. The information from health advisory groups will be used by our own independent expert panel on air quality standards. The panel is charged with the production of advice on air quality standards.

We are spending about £4 million a year on monitoring and co-ordinating monitoring of air pollutants. We have contracted a number of research bodies, many with international reputations. Sulphur dioxide and smoke are monitored at 278 sites in the country. Nitrogen dioxide is monitored at more than 1,000 sites.

In 1990, we undertook to expand the coverage and scope of air pollution monitoring in urban areas using state-of-the-art techniques. Since then, our urban monitoring network has grown. A complementary network is being set up to measure hydrocarbons such as benzene, which come mainly from road transport. It is expected that the expansion planned for these networks will bring 12 sites into operation in each of these networks by the end of 1994. Two sites in the hydrocarbon network are planned for London, one of which will be sited in Eltham, Greenwich, near the hon. Member's constituency. Clearly, with so many sites, the quantity of data now available is large. We want as much information as possible to be available to the public. Our air quality bulletins systems are a first step in this direction.

Monitoring information should be made widely available. Air quality information is available to the public by means of a free telephone information service and by the television text services, Teletext and Ceefax. Where possible, we provide regional information on the current levels of air pollutants and forecasts for the next day.

In order to provide information as clearly as possible, air pollution measurements are banded, from very good through good and poor to very poor. Should air pollution rise above the threshold between good and poor, the public can obtain advice through the free telephone advisory service. We are determined that people should have as much information as possible, although I accept that it may take some time before people are used to seeing and interpreting it.

We are taking action to combat air pollution. We are meeting the challenge. We have implemented tough legislation to control emissions from petrol and diesel vehicles. In the case of petrol cars, these are expected to reduce emissions from each vehicle by some 90 per cent. Economic growth is of course mirrored by growth in vehicle numbers and the miles travelled each year on our roads. However, we are already beginning to see the impact of the new emissions standards on emission levels, and expect to see them reflected eventually in air quality levels as the new standards work their way through the vehicle fleet.

There are many industrial sources of air pollution. Such emissions are subject to control, either by HM inspectorate of pollution or by local authorities. By themselves, controls on vehicles or on industry are not enough. Every one is responsible in some part for air pollution and has a part to play in reducing air pollution. We want to ensure that people are given useful, practical advice on what they can do to reduce air pollution—for example, the air quality bulletin system, the telephone advisory service, leaflets on summer and winter smog and on reporting excessive pollution from motor vehicles. Such information will enable everyone to help reduce air pollution, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be pleased to draw such information to the notice of his constituents.

I have spoken about regulation and about empowering people to take action themselves. Economic instruments can also influence choice to reduce air pollution—for example, differential taxation rates for leaded and unleaded petrol. The use of unleaded petrol has grown rapidly in the United Kingdom and it now stands at over 50 per cent. of sales. That success encourages us to look further at ways in which economic instruments can impact on air pollution.

Air quality in east London is an issue of concern to local people and local authorities, and to my own Department. Proposals to develop new industrial projects in the east Thames corridor have provided a focus for that concern. Nitrogen oxides are the pollutants of most concern. Although annual average levels may exceed the non-mandatory European Community guide value at the western end of the east Thames corridor, monitoring stations tell us that the mandatory EC limit value is not breached overall.

New industrial projects must now go through a number of hoops before they can commence operation. Planning permission must be obtained from the local planning authority, and that will normally include the submission of an environmental statement by the operator. Authorisation must also be obtained from Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 introduced IPC, integrated pollution control, in which BATNEEC —that is, the best available techniques not entailing excessive cost—should be used to prevent or minimise, and then render harmless, the release of substances in the environment. IPC also requires that any EC directives on air quality are met. HMIP scrutinises applications for authorisation to ensure that they comply with the objectives of the Environmental Protection Act.

I know of 10 major new industrial projects planned for the east Thames corridor, and they are in various stages of the permitting process. A proposed municipal waste incinerator put forward by Cory Environmental in Belvedere, to which the hon. Gentleman referred, has had a planning inquiry. HMIP has so far issued authorisations for four developments. HMIP has carried out a detailed study of the effects of both existing and proposed industrial processes on oxides of nitrogen levels in the east Thames corridor.

That assessment is near completion. The main conclusion of the study is that the proposed new developments are not expected to lead to a breach of the statutory EC limit value for nitrogen dioxide. New

[Mr. Tony Baldry]

industrial sources are expected to increase yearly concentrations by about 3 per cent. on existing levels. Existing industrial emissions also make a relatively small contribution, at most about 17 per cent. of existing nitrogen dioxide concentrations.

As the hon. Gentleman pointed out, vehicles account for by far the vast majority of annual average concentrations—about 70 per cent.—in London. So it is important to keep the effects of major industry in perspective. The motor car is the chief cause of the relatively high levels of nitrogen oxides in east London, as elsewhere, and, as I say, we are taking positive action to tackle emissions from motor cars. The greatest benefit can be achieved through the control of vehicle emissions.

I recognise the genuine concern that people have about air pollution. The subject is taken seriously in Government. We have in hand measures which will have a significant impact on urban air pollution levels throughout the United Kingdom. We can all play a part in tackling air pollution. I have outlined some of the advice available on what each of us might do.

Concerns about air pollution are understood and measures are being taken comprehensively to tackle air pollution. I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's concerns. We are determined to continue to tackle air pollution and to ensure that everyone in London, as elsewhere, can go about their lives confident that air quality is the highest that can possibly be achieved.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-eight minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 11 June 1993

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Manufacturing (Productivity)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

9.35 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): This is the first debate in which I have taken part since my move to the Department of Trade and Industry two weeks ago. I am delighted to be back in the Department where I first served as PPS to Lord Young of Graffham when he was Secretary of State. Since then, there have been a number of changes at the Department—it now has responsibility for energy matters and the coal industry. I was involved in the coal industry before I came to the House; I worked for British Coal from 1979 to 1986.

When I first entered the House, I was a consultant to C. M. Spectrum and A. S. L. Alliance, engaged mainly on helping with their work for the coal board. I look forward to seeing some of the developments that have occurred in the Department since I was last there.

This debate is about productivity and performance in manufacturing industry. It is worth spending a little while outlining the situation that we inherited in 1979. The technical definition of productivity is how much output is produced from a unit of input. That is a fundamental measure of economic performance. It is one of the main determinants of our competitiveness and, thus, ultimately of our standard of living.

Manufacturing productivity is especially important because of the role played by manufacturing in our balance of payments. About two thirds of our exports are of manufactured goods. High productivity keeps our costs down and enables us to compete in key areas such as quality and reliability.

It is vital that we match, or better, the productivity performance of our major competitors if we are to continue to perform well in overseas markets. Our productivity performance was transformed during the 1980s. During the 1970s, it was very poor. Between 1973 and 1979, manufacturing productivity grew by just over 1 per cent. a year in the United Kingdom. That was less than all our major competitors achieved. We fell further behind their levels of productivity. For instance, with France the gap increased from less than 20 per cent. to almost 40 per cent., and with Germany it increased from less than 45 per cent. to 70 per cent.

It is not hard to see why we performed so badly. Inflation averaged 15·5 per cent. between March 1974 and April 1979, and peaked at over 25 per cent. in 1975. It remained high and variable for much of the 1970s, creating a climate in which it was impossible to invest or plan with confidence. Public spending was an increasing burden on the wealth-creating sector of the economy. Marginal tax rates were so high that many people were discouraged from extra effort. There were—believe it or not—nine higher rates of income tax, ranging from 40 to 83 per cent.; and if the investment income surcharge was included, the highest marginal rate was no less than 98 per cent. Corporate taxes were also a heavy burden on small businesses and industrial relations were extremely poor. We lost 29 million working days through strikes in 1979 and strikes became known as the British disease. Trade unions tried to usurp the role of management rather than working co-operatively to improve the lot of their members. They delayed the introduction of new technology and modern working practices.

The nationalised industries suffered particularly badly and often experienced falls, not increases, in productivity. That was hardly surprising, given the level of subsidy that they received. In 1978-79 alone, subsidies totalled £2·2 billion at today's prices. That sustained overstaffing and featherbedding and contributed to poor productivity. In addition, industrial policy was directed at helping old industries survive rather than encouraging new products and new technologies.

Perhaps I have said enough about what we inherited in 1979. It was not a happy picture, but, if we believe the Labour party, everything was fine, there were no problems and the sole concern of the Labour Government was manufacturing which, apparently, they did so much to help. What I have said shows how little they did and how little they cared.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I was a Member during those years. The Minister has given an incomplete and distorted picture. He spoke about lost working days. At least in those years 3 million people were not unemployed and in some of them there was full employment. Matters should be put into context because the Minister's description is glib and superficial.

Mr. McLoughlin: I can understand why the hon. Gentleman tries to justify the position in 1979 and the strikes. He speaks about high employment, but between 1974 and 1979 unemployment doubled under the Labour Government. While the rest of the world was becoming more competitive, Britain was slipping and that did nothing to sustain employment or present employment opportunities. I am surprised at the hon. Gentleman, because he is occasionally more open and honest about some of the changes that need to be made in manufacturing.

Mr. Charles Hendry (High Peak): Can my hon. Friend confirm that in 1974 when Labour came to power there was a three-day working week and that five years later, when Britain was back to a five-day working week, it was producing less than it had been producing in a three-day week?

Mr. McLoughlin: I agree with my hon. Friend. I am surprised that somebody as distinguished as the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) should try to persuade us that what happened in the 1970s was good for United Kingdom manufacturing and business; it was not.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that the rise in unemployment during the 1980s and more recently is not due to a fall in employment opportunities? On the contrary, there has been a steady increase in rates of employment. There are structural and

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demographic reasons for the increase in unemployment and it is staggering that we have contained unemployment to the extent that we have. We have a better record than most of our European competitors.

Mr. McLoughlin: My hon. Friend is right. The United Kingdom has one of the highest levels of female employment in the Community. Our record is bettered only by Denmark.

Perhaps we have spent enough time on that. We have heard from one Opposition apologist about the position prior to 1979 and we should now examine some of the dramatic changes that have taken place since the 1970s. I shall contrast the poor productivity in the 1970s with that in the 1980s.

Between 1979 and 1989, productivity grew by more than 4 per cent. a year. That was a better performance than that of all our major competitors and we moved from the bottom of the league table of productivity growth to the top. That dramatically improved performance reflects the success of the policies that we have pursued over the years. We stopped supporting lame ducks and trying, unsuccessfully, to pick winners. Instead, we created an economic framework within which businesses could plan and invest with confidence. We brought inflation under control and today it is at its lowest for nearly 30 years.

We have undertaken major supply-side reforms in the labour market and in taxation. We have privatised 46 major businesses, and every one of those privatisations was opposed by the Labour party. These reforms have enabled firms to prosper in the low-inflation environment that we have created and have allowed us to attract substantial investment.

It was clear in 1979 that the trade unions were a major cause of Britain's being at the bottom of the growth and productivity leagues. The ability of managers to use resources as they saw fit had to be regained if they were even to begin to catch up. Our trade union legislation has restored the right of managers to manage. It has made trade unions more accountable to their members by requiring the direct election of union leaders and the balloting of members before industrial action. The closed shop was made unlawful and the scope for demarcation disputes was reduced. Those reforms were fundamental in helping us to improve productivity in the 1980s, but every one of them was opposed by the Labour party.

Mr. Mark Robinson (Somerton and Frome): Does my hon. Friend agree that that is exactly why it was so important to secure the opt-out from the social chapter?

Mr. McLoughlin: My hon. Friend is wholly right. *[Laughter.]* The hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) laughs. He is the only Opposition Back-Bench Member present for this important debate. My hon. Friend is right about the opt-out and I shall later examine some of the implications of that and the importance of competitiveness. It is important that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was successful in not signing Britain up to the social chapter.

Other reforms have improved the working of the labour market. We have encouraged direct employee involvement in the success of companies through tax relief for profit-related pay and employee share schemes. Our tax reforms have also helped productivity. We have given individuals incentives to greater effort because the nine higher rates of income tax have been replaced by a single higher rate of 40 per cent. We have reduced the basic rate to 25 per cent. and have introduced a 20 per cent. band.

Our marginal tax rates are among the lowest in the advanced world, making Britain an attractive place for the brightest and best to work. We have cut corporation tax from 52 to 33 per cent. and our corporation tax is now the lowest in the EC or the Group of Seven. The taxation of companies is much simpler and it is without many of the distortions that we inherited in 1979. Companies now invest according to their commercial judgment, not in the pursuit of tax breaks. As a result, the quality of investment has improved, boosting productivity.

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): How does the Minister respond to the approaches being made to the Government by the CBI and the Engineering Employers Federation? They want the Government to put back some of those tax breaks, especially for certain kinds of investment. They say that although corporation tax is low, the take is extremely high.

Mr. McLoughlin: Those matters are being put to my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who will no doubt consider them before making his announcement on the Budget. The hon. Gentleman would not expect me to comment on those matters.

Since 1979, privatisation has been a cornerstone of our policy. In that time, it has radically changed the United Kingdom's economic and industrial structure. I have already described the poor performance of the nationalised industries in the 1970s. Giving these companies commercial objectives and exposing them to market discipline was essential if their performance was to improve. Requiring them to compete for investment funds on the capital markets, rather than obtain them from the taxpayer, was vital.

We gave managers clear incentives to improve performance—and it was not just for managers that incentives changed. More than 90 per cent. of eligible employees became shareholders in the privatised firms in which they worked. That gave them a direct interest in improving productivity and performance as well.

The result has been some dramatic improvements—in British Steel, for example. In 1979-80, it took more than 13 man hours to produce one tonne of liquid steel. Now, it takes less than five man hours. It is that sort of productivity improvement that has made British Steel the EC's most efficient integrated steel producer and one of the most efficient in the world. British Gas has increased the number of customers per employee by about 19 per cent. and gas sales per employee by about 21 per cent.

Mr. Cousins: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. McLoughlin: I shall give way once more, but, as a number of my hon. Friends wish to take part in the debate, I must make progress.

Mr. Cousins: Can the Minister explain why defence manufacturers are concerned that they cannot buy armour-plated steel in Britain but have to import it from Sweden? Can he explain why some people in the car industry are extremely concerned about their inability to buy stainless steel in Britain? If it is such a wonderful story, why are those people so concerned?

Mr. McLoughlin: Once again, the Opposition spokesman is trying to justify everything that happened in 1979. He will not accept that there have been real structural changes in the steel industry. He would like to take us back to 1979, when there was a nationalised steel industry which was not competing and was unsuccessful. I well remember that time, when certain companies were closing and their car parks were full of foreign cars—yet people were complaining that British Steel was not selling its products to British companies.

Mr. Jenkin: Does my hon. Friend think that the fact that German industry sometimes has to import British steel sends it into despair?

Mr. McLoughlin: Certainly not. I shall say more about international comparisons shortly.

The supply-side reforms of the 1980s made the United Kingdom an attractive, low-cost EC country for investment by successful overseas companies. In 1991, the United Kingdom accounted for 36 per cent. of the stock of United States investment and 40 per cent. of Japanese investment in the EC. Toyota and Nissan have undertaken in the United Kingdom two of the biggest inward investment projects in Europe. Between them, they will eventually create more than 7,000 jobs.

Since 1986, an estimated 146,000 new jobs have been created in the United Kingdom from inward investment. There are many reasons why firms have chosen to invest in the United Kingdom. Toyota, for example, quoted our strong traditions both in the motor industry and in the skilled work force as reasons why it chose to invest here.

Inward investment has helped to reinvigorate key sectors such as vehicles, office equipment and chemicals. It has boosted productivity by bringing the latest technology and the best international management practice to the United Kingdom.

Research by the German chamber of commerce shows that more than two thirds of German-owned manufacturing concerns operating in the United Kingdom achieve productivity levels at least as high as comparable units in Germany. Kodak reports that productivity at the Kirkby plant, which produces its main synthetic chemical, is the highest among its worldwide operations.

Productivity in the car industry increased by 82 per cent. between 1981 and 1992, well above the average for manufacturing industry. The vehicles industry is producing 300,000 more vehicles a year than it was 10 years ago, with 100,000 fewer people. In 1992, the United Kingdom produced more than 500,000 vehicles for export and by 1995 we expect to be a net exporter of cars—a position which could not have come about without significant productivity improvments and the fact that the United Kingdom attracted that inward investment when it could have gone to any part of the European Community. When businesses look for the best place to invest, they know where it is; it is just a shame that the Opposition do not.

The benefits of inward investment to the car industry can be seen by the fact that Nissan UK is aiming to achieve by 1996 productivity levels at its Sunderland plant equal to those in Japan. Inward investment has also made the United Kingdom a net exporter of colour television sets and a major European producer of personal computers.

The continuing benefits of our supply-side reforms can be seen in the recent behaviour of manufacturing productivity, which, in the first quarter of this year, was almost 8 per cent. higher than a year earlier. That is the highest growth rate for more than six years. In earlier recessions, in the mid and late 1970s, productivity growth was much lower and often negative.

The much-improved growth performance since 1979 has resulted in a substantial narrowing of the gap between the United Kingdom and our main competitors. The true extent of the gap that remains cannot be determined with certainty. In measuring productivity, allowance has to be made for the different quality of goods produced, for the number of part-time workers and for the number of hours worked. Moreover, the availability and quality of data vary from country to country.

Nevertheless, studies have universally recorded a reduction in the productivity gap. Recent estimates suggest that, between 1979 and 1989, the manufacturing productivity gap with Germany fell from 70 to 30 per cent; that with France fell from almost 40 per cent. to about 25 per cent; our gap with the United States fell by 20 percentage points to about 65 per cent. Those figures, although encouraging, show that we still have some catching up to do. At the same time, we must be careful not to read too much into averages—there are sectors in the United Kingdom economy that have productivity levels among the highest in the world. For example, we exceed German productivity levels in metal manufacture, chemicals and electrical engineering, and French productivity levels in electrical engineering, printing and publishing.

Pharmaceuticals is an industry where the United Kingdom ranks among the best in the world. The United Kingdom pharmaceutical industry boasts four world-class companies—Glaxo, SmithKline Beecham, Wellcome and Zeneca. The first two are in the top 10 internationally. Output per employee in the pharmaceutical industry has risen steadily for a generation.

The United Kingdom aerospace industry is equal with France as the second largest in the western world in turnover. It contributed about £2·5 billion to the balance of trade in 1992. Even in those sectors where we are some way behind, there are still some world-class United Kingdom companies. However, there is no room for complacency. That is why our policies will continue to focus on areas vital to sustaining productivity growth.

Mr. Dalyell: For the sake of the Minister's officials, I give notice of a question that I hope to put to the Minister later. What is the position on the moneys that have been frozen for Glaxo exports to Iraq of urgently needed pharmacological products? I understand that the managing director of Glaxo, Dr. Richard Sykes, is considering the problem. What is the Government's position on, first, the export of Glaxo pharmacological products to Iraq and, secondly, the particular problem of those pharmacological products for which the Iraqis say they have already paid? Those are urgently needed medicines and insulin which, apparently, are being held back. I do not expect the Minister to answer now, but I hope that his officials will investigate the matter.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving notice of his questions. I hope to answer them later.

Perhaps the most important of the vital areas to which I referred is education and training. A recent study by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research

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estimated that more than half the gap in productivity levels between United Kingdom and German manufacturing was accounted for by differences in labour force skills. It is clear that a skilled and flexible work force is vital if we are to sustain productivity growth and catch up with our main competitors.

I have said quite a lot about what we have done through the supply side, such as creating a flexible labour market through our trade union reforms. The Government have done much to transform education and training and to make those relevant to the needs of industry. Our education reforms will improve the quality of young people entering the labour force. The national curriculum, with its greater emphasis on work-related subjects, will play an important part in that. Design and technology, for example, will, for the first time, be studied by all pupils up to the age of 16.

An integral part of our education reforms is testing in schools. Testing is a fact of life, and our firms are tested every day in the world marketplace. Testing in schools is therefore an essential ingredient in preparing our children for the future. Many of our efforts on training have been channelled through training and enterprise councils, which were established three years ago with the objective, among others, of improving the quality and relevance of training. TECs are responsible for delivering a wide range of training services, including the investors in people programme.

That programme aims at encouraging employers of all sizes to improve their business performance by linking the training and development of employees to business objectives. The standards set by it are national, but are delivered locally by TECs, the boards of which are dominated by local, private-sector executives. Local employers know best what training is required and the ultimate responsibility lies with them.

I am greatly encouraged by statistics published earlier this week by the Policy Studies Institute showing that in the past five years nearly two thirds of workers have increased the level of skill that they use in their jobs. We still have a long way to go, but we are making progress.

Innovation—the successful exploitation of new ideas—is a key factor in productivity growth. The recent science and technology White Paper contains proposals that will improve the focus of public spending in that area.

Many more companies will be able to gain access to science and technology and innovation best practice. In particular, small firms will have better access to science and technology. Small firms are a vital source of innovation and productivity improvements.

The Government support small firms with a variety of measures. Innovation is encouraged through the Smart and Spur programmes, which assist such firms in the development of new products and processes involving significant technical advance.

The shift in emphasis towards giving greater help to small firms in science and technology underlines our commitment to that sector. I am confident that it will bring with it an increase in competitiveness and associated gains in productivity.

In 1985, my Department launched the deregulation initiative. That on-going exercise is designed to eliminate the burden of unnecessary regulation on firms—a burden which imposes costs that reduce productivity and damage competitiveness.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister recently gave fresh impetus to that assault on red tape. As a result, we are systematically reviewing all existing regulations and other forms of red tape that the Government impose on business. Wherever possible, we will remove or simplify regulations and procedures so as to minimise the costs to small firms—and no further regulation will be imposed on business without the costs having being spelt out in Parliament first.

There has been a substantial improvement in our manufacturing productivity performance since 1979. In the short term, of course higher productivity often means fewer jobs—but in the long term, increased productivity boosts investment and growth and creates a substantial number of sustainable jobs.

We have a higher proportion of the adult population in work than any other EC country except Denmark and Luxembourg—a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin)—and the gains that were made will be shown to be real and long lasting as we we emerge from recession.

The policies currently pursued by this Government will build on those improvements. Paramount among them are the constant efforts that we are making to keep inflation low. At 1·3 per cent. in April, retail prices index headline inflation was the lowest for nearly 30 years, and underlying inflation is the lowest for 25 years. We have set clear targets for inflation.

Our success in the fight against inflation has allowed interest rates to come down to their lowest level for 15 years. Low inflation, low interest rates and rising productivity are essential ingredients of industrial success. Productivity is sharply up, and in the first quarter of this year manufacturing unit wage costs were 2·9 per cent. below their level a year earlier—the best performance since records began in 1970. Provided that we stop talking of the decline of manufacturing and appreciate more the excellent manufacturing sectors and firms that we have, we can build on the progress that we have already made. And we can look forward, with confidence, to continued growth in manufacturing productivity during the rest of the 1990s and beyond.

10.3 am

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): The Minister read us largely a history lesson. I am not sure how good it was, but it is not history lessons that we need now. After a week for the party of government full of such sturm und drang, I suppose that the Government might turn to history for a little comfort.

The Minister's case amounts to saying that during the 1980s, Conservative Governments applied to British industry some of the most volatile swings in policy change, interest rates and so on, ever imposed by any Government. There are some survivors and the Government seek to take credit for that. The technique is the same as electro-convulsive therapy. Those who do well out of it bring to the therapy a native robustness and good health that is capable of enduring the experience. The Government cannot take much credit for the survivors of that dreadful experience of the 1980s, with all its wild swings of economic intentions and performance.

The most worrying aspect of even the positive elements of the 1980s is the other side to them. It is true that the 1980s saw a considerable increase in manufacturing productivity and I will refer later to the reason why that might have happened. The Minister rightly identified two key sectors—aerospace and the chemical pharmaceutical industries—which, if we can get it right, will be the main motors of British economic success in years to come. Their present record of productivity and production is extraordinarily powerful and important and provides a model for the rest of the economy.

The Government's difficulty is that while there have been productivity gains in manufacturing, it is equally true that productivity across the whole economy has not improved to anything like the same degree. If the service sector—distribution, retailing, banking, insurance and financial services—in which employment grew throughout the 1980s is to be put to the storms through which manufacturing industry went in the early and mid-1980s, the consequences for employment, particularly in the southern part of the country, are likely to be devastating.

The hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) made a significant remark. The Minister was having difficulty at the time explaining manufacturing productivity and its connection with employment. If one increases production 5 per cent. and gets rid of 2·5 million or 2·75 million jobs in the process, no one can take credit for that —but if one increases production and maintains employment, that is a triumph. That is not the Government's record. Their record is of increasing manufacturing production by 5 per cent. and of disposing of 2·5 million to 2·75 million workers.

Conservative Members should think carefully before quoting that as a great success. The consequences of that policy are to be found on every street corner in every town and city in the country. They are to be found in the reduction in the feeling of belonging to society which is suffered by so many. As a Member of Parliament representing a Tyneside constituency, I have seen for myself and in the media men leaving Swan Hunter shipyard, which is currently in great difficulty. Many jobs there have already been lost and now the jobs of the skilled men who walk up the bank from that shipyard—men with meaningful skills such as electricians, fitters and other high-productivity workers—have been laid low by that company's financial position and lack of Government orders. Those men aged 40 with young families and mortgages are saying openly and publicly that they never expect to have a proper job again. Many of them are looking for contract jobs at the other end of the country or abroad. If they get such jobs, they will never see their young families or participate in growing up with them. That is the economic fate that those men see for themselves. I doubt whether anything that is said by Conservative Members this morning will change the harsh realities of their situation.

That is the reality of some of the productivity gains. It is the sort of thing that we mean when we talk about structural and demographic trends. It is the reality of city life and town life when we dismiss so many skills and so much experience and commitment and say that it is a structural and demographic change. It is an unfortunate approach to take.

Mr. McLoughlin: No one underestimates the seriousness of people being made unemployed and the devastation that it can have on individuals and their families. The hon. Gentleman should tell us whether he believes that keeping productivity levels low and, therefore, keeping people in employment would necessarily lead to a growth in exports and selling our goods abroad when they become more expensive than those of other countries. We must compete. It is no good trying to get away from the fact that we will not be able to do that without increased productivity.

Mr. Cousins: Clearly, I have not said that. Unfortunately, the sector industries in which the productivity gains have been the highest are the most exposed to economic difficulty at present. That is precisely the problem.

We should take a brief excursion into history to look at the sort of community that existed in the 1930s. I do not represent such a community—my constituency is described in all the handbooks as middle class residential and I do not argue with that. A better comparison would be to consider the shipbuilding areas on Tyneside down the river. With the level of unemployment that existed in the 1930s, men were at the shipyard gates every morning seeking work. Throughout the depth of the 1930s recession, people never stopped being in their own minds riveters, welders, fitters, boilermakers, platers or platers' helpers. The reality of the economic situation brought about by the Government today is that once a man in those industries loses his job, he throws away his identity and has no credibility that he will ever work at his trade or skill again.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): I have listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman says and I understand his point. But I shall put two points to him. First, if we are looking at a comparison with the 1930s, the level of unemployment in what was a much smaller work force was 25 per cent., so to compare it to today's level is a false analogy.

Secondly, the hon. Gentleman is absolutely accurate —this is not the Government's fault. It is not the fault of the Governments of Spain, France, America or any other country in the developed world. The hon. Gentleman is talking about a phenomenon that always occurs—a loss of identity of this sort—when there is a great revolution in productivity, whether it is the agricultural revolution, the industrial revolution or the technological revolution. When there are great changes, people lose their working indentities. It is a challenge for every country in the industrialised world.

Mr. Cousins: The hon. Gentleman is right, but what he has not come to terms with is that all Governments in the European Community, whether Christian Democrat or Social Democrat, accept a measure of responsibility for that. Perhaps Christian Democrat parties and Governments provide a good model for Conservative Members. If we had a Christian Democrat Government, rather than a Conservative Government, matters would be different because we would not then have the wiping of the hands of responsibility for those matters that we see in the present Government. A Christian Democrat Government would not wipe away their responsibility for the problems to which I have drawn attention. We see Christian Democrat Governments standing behind people in their time of difficulty, accepting a great measure of social responsibility and devising welfare systems that are

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precisely targeted at enabling a long and painful but necessary transition from one sort of employment to another. Christian Democrat Governments across the European Community are asking employers to accept obligations to be actively involved. Was not that the purpose of the whole debate about the social charter and the social chapter?

Mr. Brazier: To suggest that somehow or other all over the continent they are doing something that we are not is manifestly nonsense. To give one example, the United Kingdom is the only country in the EC that guarantees all school leavers a training place if they do not have a job. If one looks at the whole EC, our level of youth unemployment among the age group immediately above is lower than that of most of our economic partners for that reason.

Mr. Cousins: If the hon. Gentleman looked at the training policies pursued by Christian Democrat parties and Governments in the Netherlands and Germany, he would be ashamed to say what he just said, because the attitude of those parties and Governments is completely different. They do not regard training as a residual after all the economic forces have been at work—one finally offers, inadequately in many cases, a residual commitment to find a training place in some sort of scheme. That is not the case. Those parties and Governments want their young people to be full members of their economies and participate in significant training that is immediately locked into the patterns of occupations and the pattern of employment. That is an entirely different policy from the one followed by the Conservative party and the Conservative Government.

Mr. Jenkin: I am listening carefully to the hon. Gentleman's comparison between our employment and industrial policies, especially our training policy, and those on the continent. The House would be most interested to hear about the measures, spending and activities in which he thinks the Government should be engaging. What proposals does he envisage which we are not carrying out at present? His general comments have left us in the dark.

Mr. Cousins: It is a pity that the hon. Gentleman did not ask the Minister that question when he was reading his historical lesson. I accept the point of correction. We shall come back to the narrow task and examine it.

I have made the point that we must be worried about the comparison between whole economy productivity and manufacturing productivity. There are some dangerous signs there, because, if productivity improvements are to be made in the service sector by the same mechanisms as have delivered productivity improvements in manufacturing industries, there may be some remarkable reductions of employment in precisely those sectors of the economy in which employment has grown recently.

In response to a point made earlier by the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier), perhaps the most worrying thing about the present recession is that 2 million jobs have been lost, but only 1·3 million people have been added to the unemployment register—700,000 people have apparently, for these purposes, disappeared. What is the explanation? There are some extremely worrying facts. Many people are still part of the economic life of the country but do not register as unemployed because they believe that there is no point in doing so: there are no jobs on offer or, more significantly, the sort of employment that they had did not provide a continuing basis of national insurance contributions to trigger the right to unemployment benefit.

It must be a source of anxiety to us all that so many people are employed on the basis of either low wages or casual or temporary employment which does not allow them to obtain unemployment benefit when they lose their jobs. Their contribution records do not entitle them to claim unemployment benefit. The existence of such a large number of people who are on low wages, mostly in the service sector, but in certain manufacturing sectors as well, should be a source of grave anxiety to us all.

We are all aware of the unemployment problem, but there is now a massive problem of sub-employment—people who work in a twilight sector of the economy that does not enable them to build up sufficient credits, through the national insurance system, to enable them to obtain unemployment benefit when they lose that source of employment. When there are shake-outs in manufacturing industry, people with young families find that regular employment, which they are entitled to expect, is no longer available to them and that they have to seek casual, temporary work—often a long way from their homes—if they are to have any sort of income. When the industries in which they are then employed also fall on hard times, they find that they cannot register for unemployment benefit.

Productivity gains have been achieved by the loss of jobs. They have not been achieved by improving the human or physical capital of industry. I exclude the two sectors to which I have already referred: chemicals and pharmaceuticals and the aerospace industry. There have been significant productivity gains in the chemicals, pharmaceuticals and aerospace industries, on the basis of larger human or physical capital inputs and rising production.

Mr. Jenkin: Does the hon. Gentleman seriously propose that there has been no increase whatsoever in the skills base in the motor manufacturing industry, for example, in steelmaking and in a whole range of other industries? The hon. Gentleman's proposal is absolutely preposterous.

Mr. Cousins: Most of the productivity gains in almost every sector of industry can be accounted for by loss of employment, not by other changes. I did not say that there had been no increase in skills, but loss of employment has made the largest contribution to productivity gains. In a limited number of industrial sectors, more has been contributed by larger capital inputs and rising production than by loss of employment. The chemical and pharmaceutical industries stand alone in that respect.

Mr. McLoughlin: The hon. Gentleman's point is fairly weak. Is he suggesting that we should keep employment up and productivity levels down? He states that there has been no growth in employment. How, therefore, does he account for the fact that Toyota and Nissan have made major investments in this country and have created jobs for people here, with the result that, by 1995, we shall be a net exporter of cars? Is the hon. Gentleman telling us that, somehow, that is a bad thing?

Mr. Cousins: Let me put the point to the Minister in another way. The innovation unit of the Department of Employment issued this week what is called a company reporting scoreboard on research and development expenditure. The foreword to it was written by the President of the Board of Trade. He takes pride in the fact that the reported spend, according to company reports throughout the industrial sector—every large British company is to be found in this report—increased by 6 per cent. However, the President of the Board of Trade then said:

"We cannot however be complacent. Internationally the figures reported by the top 200 companies have risen by 8 per cent. and the UK's top spender is only 47th in that league. It is also sobering to see that the top international companies spend some 4·6 per cent. of their sales figures on research and development where UK companies spend 1·6 per cent. These figures can only underline my statement about the need to increase the effectiveness of the UK's research effort."

He also talked about

"developing an innovative culture where new ideas are readily exploited".

That may be a matter of contention for the hon. Member for Colchester, North, but it is not a matter of contention for the President of the Board of Trade. He recognises the point that I make. He recognises that productivity gains have not been achieved on the basis of success of the kind with which the Minister seeks to deceive us this morning. According to the President of the Board of Trade, on the basis of his Department's own figures, the United Kingdom's top spender is 47th in the international league of the 200 top companies. That is the real record of this Government which they must try to defend.

One of the great problems with British industry is the lack of training and management at middle level. Technicians and supervisors are often called on to perform on the basis of inadequate preparation. That fact is well attested. The Minister is able to point to the example of Toyota and Nissan only because their great contribution to British industry is that they have not made that mistake. Nissan is a company which, as one would expect of a Member of Parliament with a constituency in the north-east of England, I know well. Toyota and Nissan perceive that industry succeeds on the basis of supervision, technicians and middle management. It is as a result of the team work for which those men and women are responsible that productivity is increased.

The remarkable increase in productivity in manufacturing industry in my region has been brought about substantially by those companies and by the spread of the culture and insights that they brought with them to other related companies. That is what we should seek to do right across industry. There is an enormous amount to be achieved by backing up technicians and supervision and by building up workplace practices on the basis of teamwork. That is the secret of the success of Toyota and Nissan and of the success of the aerospace and pharmaceutical and chemical industries, which already had in place precisely those management techniques.

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): I am sure that the hon. Gentleman recognises that the change in work practices introduced by Toyota and Nissan into the car industry are applied now by Vauxhall.

Mr. Cousins: Indeed. Those practices are certainly not now confined to a handful of Japanese companies. That illustrates what can be achieved across the whole spectrum of British industry. Those practices also illustrate how much further there is to go and how much more can be achieved in terms of increasing productivity, not simply by sacking people and reducing employment, but by changing workplace practices on the basis of teamwork and commitment, which results in success.

Mr. Hendry: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that those changes were brought about as a result of this Government's policy, in the teeth of opposition from the Labour party and its union paymasters, who have backed every single Spanish practice and every outdated demarcation dispute and who have been the greatest factor in the resistance to change? One of the most important factors in these changes has been the breaking of that stranglehold upon British industry.

Mr. Cousins: It is simply fanciful for Conservative Members to give the Government the sole credit for successful inward investment. That is entirely mistaken.

Mr. McLoughlin: If that is so, can the hon. Gentleman explain why that inward investment was made in Britain?

Mr. Cousins: I played some part myself——

Mr. Jenkin: The hon. Gentleman was responsible!

Mr. Cousins: No. My part in the process enabled me to see why Nissan chose to locate its plant in the north-east of England. A variety of factors is always involved in such decisions, one of the most important of which was that Nissan and Toyota looked at parts of Britain where they knew that well-organised, highly motivated, skilled and productive workers had been made redundant in large numbers.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The hon. Gentleman is beginning to give the impression that only two companies have sought to make inward investment in Britain. The example of south Wales shows that a vast number of companies —not just Japanese—have chosen to locate in Britain. He will recognise that Britain has been more successful than any of its European partners in attracting inward investment.

Mr. Cousins: I am in a measure of agreement with the hon. Gentleman. One of the most successful examples of inward investment in my area is Komatsu. What did it do? It took over the work force and trade unions of a tractor plant that had been closed, but, because it had the right approach to getting the best from people in the community and from the work force and because it respected the skills and experience of the work force, it was able to achieve things of which, I am afraid, British management, with their older tradition, was not capable.

Conservative Members denounce trade union practices and refer to Spanish practices, but they should recognise the role that simple bad management played in bringing down some major British industries.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The hon. Gentleman is speaking in a derogatory manner about British industry. British Steel in Llanwern, which I know extremely well, has gone through a revolution in terms of its industrial practices and that needs to be recognised. The examples of inward investors that the hon. Gentleman gave have been widely copied throughout British industry and I think that British Steel was ahead of the pack.

Mr. Cousins: Indeed. I have already said that there are sectors of British industry, and they are among the most successful, where those practices are already in place. The chemical, pharmaceutical and aerospace industries already operated such methods.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on being able to read John Edmonds' handwriting so well. Would those foreign companies have invested in Britain if the Conservative Government had not reformed the trade union practices of the 1970s—yes or no?

Mr. Cousins: Of course they would have come here. My only regret is that the potential that they saw in this country and in its skilled and experienced work force was put on the scrap heap in the first place. Japanese, American and European inward investors saw potential in work forces that had simply been discarded by the Government and by sections of British industry in the terrible, unnecessary storms of the early 1980s.

Mr. Jenkin *rose*——

Mr. Mark Robinson *rose*——

Mr. Cousins: I am sorry, I must press on.

My central point is that the productivity gains that have been made are a consequence of unemployment. We would have wanted those productivity gains to be achieved as the most successful sectors of British industry have achieved them—as a consequence not of unemployment but of organic growth, innovation and research and development.

Our chemical, pharmaceutical and aerospace industries have achieved precisely that, but one significant fact differentiates those industries from many industries that have performed less successfully. The success of those industries, especially pharmaceuticals and aerospace, rested on the basis of Government procurement. The reliability of Government procurement through the national health service and defence expenditure enabled those industrial successes to be achieved. Those industries, pharmaceuticals and aerospace, have benefited most from direct Government intervention in the form of launch aid under the Industry Act 1975, which this Government continued. The success of the aerospace industry could not have been achieved without that.

Those industries benefited because, in partnership with the education system and especially the higher education system, they were able to develop and exploit enormous quantities of graduate person power. Those industries provide a quite different model and a different set of signals for the role of Government in increasing productivity from the one in which the Government take most pride. They have grown on the basis of organic growth, of production engineering rather than financial engineering and of innovation rather than seeking to exploit asset values and asset stripping. They have grown on the basis of continually bringing new products to the market. They have operated on the basis of high levels of union organisation and of drawing the unionised work forces into the process of industrial consultation and decision making. They have achieved their productivity on the basis of teamwork rather than confrontation.

That is why those industries have succeeded. Those are the models that we should be seeking to adopt when we think about increasing productivity across the rest of our industrial sectors. Those models are precisely the opposite of the way in which the Government's policies and the thrust of their intentions are going at the present time.

10.37 am

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary on his move back to industry. I am glad that he is wearing his industrial hat again. He has first-hand practical experience of a major industry.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) began by referring to the difficulties that the governing party has experienced in the past week. I take his point. We have, in a sense, been here before, because my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont) compared himself with Mr. Selwyn Lloyd, the other Chancellor of the Exchequer who was dismissed. I wondered, thinking about history, whether Mr. Selwyn Lamont had been replaced by Mr. Reginald Clarke and whether we shall have a rerun of 1962-63. I remember that, on becoming Chancellor, Mr. Maudling accelerated expansion and Conservative fortunes recovered. I am immensely encouraged by what my right hon. and learned Friend the new Chancellor has said about the need for faster economic growth and to preserve the welfare state—two excellent policy openings from my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor, whom every Conservative Member wishes well in his new tasks and opportunities.

What the Chancellor of the Exchequer said about economic growth makes today's debate extremely relevant. I am sure that all hon. Members who speak today will underline the great importance of our manufacturing industry to the country. We must remember that we unfortunately have a smaller manufacturing base than France or Germany. We have a considerable amount of catching up to do to restore ourselves to the position of a major manufacturer in the world economy.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State rightly referred to the new mood of co-operation in industry which, to a great extent, has been brought about by the changed atmosphere in industrial relations that followed our sensible trade union reforms. In my area, we welcome the transformed atmosphere in the car industry, which is due not only to Japanese investment in the car industry —and we greatly welcome Nissan in Bedfordshire—but to Vauxhall, although it must be said that many jobs have been shed over the years as new industrial methods and a greater emphasis on plant and machinery have been introduced.

I cannot let the debate pass without saying that although the improved atmosphere in the industry as a whole and the improvement at Vauxhall motors is mightily good for Bedfordshire, Dunstable suffers the continuing tragedy of the complete loss of truck production with the demise of AWD (Bedford) and the loss of truck manufacturing at Renault. The Minister knows that Bedfordshire will continue to press his Department for all possible help so that we can restructure the manufacturing base in my part of Bedfordshire, which has played a substantial role in exports and industrial success since the war.

Mr. Dalyell: The hon. Gentleman mentioned "all possible help". I know that he will recollect that he secured an extremely pertinent Adjournment debate on exports to

Libya from his constituency. Does he think that it is important that the Government should consider—I shall not press him for any commitment beyond that—re-examining sanctions against the valuable Libyan market? Sanctions against Libya have been extremely damaging to British industry. Does he believe that that is a matter for reconsideration?

Mr. Madel: I do, and I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for reminding me of that debate and of the contributions that we both made in European Standing Committee B on that issue. He is right to draw attention to the fact that, in 1992, there was a possibility of Bedford Trucks getting a substantial order for non-military, civilian trucks for Libya. For various reasons, the order did not go through, and we still do not know the full story behind that. However, there are opportunities for exports other than non-military trucks to Libya, and I do believe that the issue should be reconsidered. Where better to re-examine it than at the Copenhagen summit later this month, where the Heads of State will consider trade as they grapple with Europe's unemployment difficulties?

I greatly welcome my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade's sense of purpose and energy. In an article in the *Financial Times* on 26 April 1993, under the sub-heading "Where the main thrust of the DTI's new competitive policy will be focused . . ." and in the section headed "Sectoral divisions", it is stated:

"There will also be plenty of emphasis on so-called benchmarking—continually comparing company and industry performance against best practice and recommending ways of improvement."

That is welcome because it urges greater industrial co-operation, but it also underlines the DTI's philosophy that competition is not about doing down one's neighbour but is something which is thoroughly healthy for the economy and something which should constantly be fostered. I shall spend a few minutes amplifying the idea of improvement contained in the quotation.

Clearly, in any debate on manufacturing productivity, we must say something about the necessity of continuing to improve the education system which is so relevant to our manufacturing performance. I hope that the summer term will mark the end of the wretched discord between the teachers and the Government about testing. The next marker on the education scene will be the GCSE and A-level results in August. When they are published, I hope that there will be no instant comments but a careful analysis of what has happened in comparison with previous years. I hope that Sir Ron Dearing and his new committee will also examine the matter.

Parents obviously want to know whether GCSE standards are continuing to improve, but they will also want to know whether there is uniformity of marking by the various GCSE and A-level boards. They will want assurances that the testing before the GCSE is designed to improve GCSE standards. The Government should take more credit for introducing the new system of public examination, which came about after a great deal of internal debate in the Cabinet and in the then Department of Education and Science. Nothing pleases employers more than to see proof of rising standards in GCSEs. Employers and parents want to know that the tests before the GCSE exams are designed to raise standards. That is what parents will be looking for when the next education marker appears in August.

I outline two additional points on which I should like the Government to act. I want it to be made easier for young people to do the necessary studying on their own. As they move to GCSE and A-level, more work is done by the individual with the necessary supervision from time to time. Greater use should be made of public libraries, parts of which should be set aside for young people to do the necessary study during the day. There should also be greater use of schools outside school hours so that young people can do personal study to improve their GCSE and A-level performances.

We must also constantly examine the student support system and ensure that we are not doing anything to deter young people from entering higher or further education. I am especially worried about the way the discretionary grant system works. Is it as helpful as it could be to young people?

On the question of the education service at the local level, and before Sir John Banham and his team plunge into making big changes to the shire counties and district councils and suggest more unitary authorities, as I think that they might, I ask them to consider whether changing local government will improve the education service in any given area. I was delighted when the President of the Board of Trade, in his former role as Secretary of State for the Environment, said that there would be no uniform change in local government as happened in 1974. In passing, I ask Sir John Banham and his team, who are doing an important job, please to ensure that any local government changes will improve the education system as it is delivered locally.

On more general matters, it is still early days to talk about changes in the financing of roads and motorways. However, we all recognise that industry needs to improve the speed and efficiency with which it gets goods to market. That inevitably means an acceleration of infrastructure improvements. We are still at an early stage with the White Paper on possible road pricing on motorways. We should avoid a flat-rate charge. If industry is to accept the idea, it would far prefer a pay-as-you-go system on certain motorways. Obviously, that means waiting for the new technology necessary to make it practicable. If we have to wait a bit, fine. Let us ensure that the technology is British made.

Whatever happens with road pricing and whatever we do with the railways, we must always remember that the majority of goods transported around the country will continue to go on the roads. That means that we need a better infrastructure system. The way in which we price that and charge for it must be ultra-sensitive to industry's needs and to industry's costs.

We must stay in the world league of manufacturing. We must be right at the top for the sake of employment, for the sake of prosperity and for the sake of social stability. That means that we must have a policy that produces a high level of investment which will provide more plant and machinery. That means taking risks and being patient for the results to show when there has been investment in plant and machinery. That means a sea change in the banking system's attitude to risk-taking in manufacturing industry.

One way in which industry—big, medium and small—can be helped, especially in the regions, is by more non-executive directors on boards of companies coming from the banking system. They would then understand on a day-to-day basis, as a result of their board duties, what

[Mr. Madel]

the problems are for manufacturing industry and how, inevitably, it is a slow, patient business to get a company going and for profits to come on stream.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The hon. Gentleman said that it was necessary for us to catch up in terms of investment compared with France and Germany. He is now saying that we need to have more investment in capital equipment in manufacturing industry. Is he aware that, according to the latest statistics from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, we have only half the private capital sector levels of Germany and only three quarters those of France? It is no good. If we are to increase productivity and employment—I think that the hon. Gentleman sees this argument—we need greater investment in industry.

Mr. Madel: Yes, I agree; we need greater investment and I am developing that point. To achieve that, one must have a closer relationship between the banking system and the manufacturing system. I made the point about getting more people from banks on the boards of companies so that they would understand what a slow process achieving the results of investment can be.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) may make this next point if he catches your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker. There is a need for a big commitment to research and development. I welcomed the White Paper on science and technology which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster announced recently. One point in his statement to the House especially caught my attention. He said that he had decided to establish a new council for science and technology, which he would chair on behalf of the Prime Minister, to provide the Government with

"independent expert advice at the highest level on research spending priorities."—[*Official Report*, 26 May 1993; Vol. 225, c. 924.]

That is a welcome underlining of the Government's role in research spending priorities. I am sure that we shall all draw attention in the debate not only to the Government's role in research, but to the Government's role, as has been mentioned, as a purchaser of manufactured goods and to what the Government can do to help manufacturing industry by buying British and thinking in the long term.

There is also an obvious need for a patient and firm commitment to innovation. That is partly what the Government do in terms of research. However, we must also recognise that to stay in the world league, companies will have to come together to initiate joint research funding. That must not be looked at with suspicion or be seen as leading to a monopoly. Joint funding is happening and must be further encouraged to ensure that Britain remains a major manufacturer.

We need not only investment in plant and machinery, and innovation. There is also a need constantly to improve our training system. We need to keep abreast of new skills. We need to recognise that top-class training is required, and that will be expensive. People need to have more clearly explained to them the role of the training and enterprise councils at local level.

Mr. Streeter: Does my hon. Friend agree that the local training and enterprise councils are a great success story, especially in Devon and Cornwall? The TECs have made dramatic inroads into training delivery. That is one of the many Conservative policies that are successes. It has set us up very nicely for the future.

Mr. Madel: I agree. My hon. Friend has referred to what has been done in his area, which is very welcome. The same point applies to Bedfordshire. We have a good training and enterprise council. However, both parts of the title need to be emphasised—the training and the enterprise. If we do not have the enterprise and if we do not get the jobs, we shall not be able to cure the unemployment problem.

We must manufacture our way out of the dreadful hole to which my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer referred recently. I greatly welcome the positive role that the Department of Trade and Industry is now playing and the fact that the philosophy of my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is not for clumsy intervention in industry, but for Government support for industry, especially in innovation, in research and in training.

I want this Conservative Government to rediscover their historical role of achieving prosperity with a purpose. The purpose of prosperity is to ensure that we have real equality of opportunity. The British people want politics and policies that are decent, sensible and competent. I am certain that the Government will achieve all three aims.

10.56 am

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): It is a great pleasure to take part in this debate. As other hon. Members have said, it is a very important debate. We know that our country prospers by our ability to produce and sell goods in the markets of the world. We once did. However, no matter what gloss the Minister has attempted to put on the debate, the position today cannot give us much pride or much hope for the future.

The debate shows how areas of our country differ. The Minister paints a glowing picture of life in the United Kingdom. I am prepared to admit that that may be true of industry in some areas. However, that is not true of London. We were once, not so long ago, one of the main industrial areas. There was a great deal of industry throughout London which produced goods that sold in the markets of the world. That industry offered a range of jobs to the people of London, and many of those jobs were extremely well paid. But where is the growth industry now in London and in much of the south?

The Minister should be aware that we in London now have some of the highest unemployment in the United Kingdom. We have young people who have never worked in their lives. We have men and women who are out of work for the first time in their lives and who do not know whether they will ever work again. We have people in their 50s who, sadly, are convinced that they will never work again. That is the picture in London. There are few work opportunities and there is little industrial activity.

We have heard in recent months—I suppose that we shall continue to hear this for some time to come—about the growth of the green shoots. I only wish that they were growing, and I am sure that that is the feeling of many hon. Members. Until those so-called green shoots start to grow and prosper, our problems will continue—sadly, for a very long time to come. Let me quote a comment made in March by Lord Prior, a former Secretary of State for Employment, who is now chairman of GEC:

"It will require substantial effort over the next 20 years to get our manufacturing base back to the levels we want to see." It would be hard to imagine a stronger criticism and indictment of the Government by a former Conservative Secretary of State.

Let us look at the figures. The Minister referred to the last Labour Government. Let us go back to the start of the present Government's period in office. In 1979——

It being Eleven o'clock, MADAM SPEAKER *interrupted the proceedings, pursuant to Standing Order No. 11 (Friday sittings).*

Bosnia

11 am

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the situation relating to British troops of the United Nations in the Travnik area.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Jeremy Hanley): A series of incidents involving a convoy of trucks carrying humanitarian aid occurred yesterday and today near Novi Travnik. This was not an official United Nations convoy and had been organised by the local authorities of the town of Tuzla, whose population is predominantly Muslim; it was carrying supplies from the Dalmatian coast to Tuzla.

Yesterday afternoon, the convoy, which was not escorted, came into conflict with troops of the HVO—the Bosnian Croation army—4 km south of Novi Travnik. It seems clear that there were several Muslim casualties and it is believed that some Muslim drivers were taken away and shot.

Yesterday afternoon, units of the first battalion Prince of Wales Own Regiment—1 PWO—were ordered by UNPROFOR headquarters in Bosnia-Herzegovina to go to the scene to give protection to the convoy and to stabilise the situation. They were authorised to use force if necessary. They were subsequently tasked with escorting the convoy to Tuzla and the trucks were then designated a United Nations protected convoy.

At about 8 am local time today, three HVO soldiers engaged 1 PWO's Warrior vehicles with fire. 1 PWO, while protecting the convoy, first fired warning shots; but when the HVO firing continued, a further burst was fired from a Warrior. Two HVO soldiers were hit and a third fled the scene. There were no British casualties. I cannot confirm media reports that the HVO soldiers were killed, although that may well be true. I understand that the convoy subsequently moved forward in the direction of Tuzla via Vitez.

The incident graphically illustrates the hazards of delivering aid to those caught up in the conflict in Bosnia and the vital humanitarian role played by British troops and others in UNPROFOR. From the information available to me, I am satisfied that British troops acted promptly and efficiently and fully in accordance with operational rules and procedures.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Before we proceed, let me draw hon. Members' attention to the fact that the question deals specifically with British troops of the United Nations in the Travnik area. It goes no wider than that. It is a narrow question, and I hope that hon. Members will restrict their remarks accordingly.

Mr. Dalyell: As a national service man—tank crew with the Scots Dragoon Guards—40 years ago, I feel deeply for service men in danger. British and United Nations troops in the Travnik area are in one hell of a position.

What are the guidelines for their self-defence? What happens if the warlords in the Travnik area try to seek revenge? It seems to me that we are talking about a hiding to nothing. What warnings were given to the Croats? The Minister said that drivers were taken away and shot. Could he expand on the circumstances in which those

[Mr. Dalyell]

drivers were taken away? Are the rules of engagement the standard United Nations rules, and what precisely is the position as regards authorisation to fire or to return fire?

In relation to United Nations resolution No. 770, which includes the words "and others", may I ask about the position of non-United Nations convoys in the Travnik area? In particular, was there a request for the Muslim convoy to be escorted? What is the status of such requests and what is the mechanism by which they are made?

In the event of revenge for what has happened in the Travnik area, are we to augment forces? Will there be an escalation or withdrawal? That is a very worrying question, which has become acute this morning. Do we change the rules of engagement? What are the contingency plans for withdrawal or evacuation not only of United Nations military personnel but of aid personnel in the Travnik area?

What is the position of the sappers who were supposedly held at gunpoint by Muslim forces? Were they deprived of their equipment? Did they try to return fire, and were they advised to try to return fire?

What is the position of the RFA Argus and the artillery pieces that were available for British and United Nations troops to defend themselves? Are jets from Britain being deployed in readiness to defend safe areas and British forces in the Travnik area?

Finally, may I say that those who sit on green Benches had better be very cautious about making decisions that commit troops in a civil war?

Mr. Hanley: The hon. Gentleman has gone slightly wider than his original question, but I shall try to accommodate him as best I can.

The incidents that I described happened in the area to which the hon. Gentleman referred, and he is right that this was an unofficial humanitarian convoy. The convoy had asked for assistance, but UNPROFOR had decided that the situation in the area was dangerous and therefore did not give it permission to travel or to have assistance. It came under attack last night; the situation was reassessed and 1 PWO was sent to help it.

Our troops were acting on the orders of the United Nations command in Bosnia-Herzegovina and within the spirit of the mandate to provide protective support for humanitarian convoys. The soldiers came under fire, and, in such circumstances, they have a right to act in self-defence. That is exactly what they were doing. They were within their mandate throughout.

The United Nations command in Bosnia of course regards the incident as a serious one, but does not believe that it presages a general decline in the situation throughout Bosnia or in the British area of responsibility. Because we believe that there are serious issues to be addressed and a need to ensure that our troops are fully protected whatever the circumstances, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State yesterday announced that further troops were to be put in readiness lest they be needed. We are studying the incident, but I cannot give any further details.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the drivers of the vehicles who were taken away and shot. We have information that that could have happened last night. They would have been Muslim drivers of the convoy—taken by the HVO and killed. It is a disgraceful incident and fully justifies the deployment of our troops. We must remember that there is no escalation at all in the role of those troops. They are there to support humanitarian aid. Right hon. and hon. Members alike fully understand the risks that are involved, but the general mood, both in the House and in the country, is that we are very proud indeed of our troops and of the way in which they are carrying out their humanitarian task. Of course we do not wish them to be put any more severely at risk than the situation dictates.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): May I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on assuming his heavy new responsibilities which I know he will discharge excellently?

Given the obvious fact that in the Travnik area relief work is becoming ever more dangerous—as it is elsewhere in Bosnia—as we see the carve-up of the state of Bosnia reflected in the violence around Travnik and in ever more blood-soaked violence, given the increasing difficulties for our own heroic troops and given United Nations resolution 836 passed on 4 June, which greatly extends the mandate for self-defence and retaliation for UN troops in Bosnia and in the Travnik area, will my hon. Friend assure the House very strongly indeed that he is keeping an hour-by-hour and day-by-day eye on the position of our troops in this area and in Bosnia generally and that he is monitoring them all the time to ensure that they are not left in an impossible position or in one where the conditions have changed but their equipment has not necessarily changed so that they are placed in great difficulties?

Mr. Hanley: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his opening comments. I assure him and the House that we are dealing with this matter at the Ministry of Defence and at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office is on the Front Bench beside me today.

We are concentrating on the matter with every passing minute. Of course, information is difficult to come by immediately and that is why I did not comment earlier on the media reports. However, I can assure my right hon. Friend that we are monitoring the situation very closely, not only because of our duty to deliver humanitarian aid, but, as I said before, to ensure that our own troops are not placed at undue risk when delivering that aid.

My right hon. Friend mentioned Security Council resolution 836, which was passed on 4 June. He is right to say that that resolution gives us a greater right to react if our troops come under fire or if we need to withdraw our troops. However, that is a contingency plan and it has not been acted upon. The troops are now at a higher level of readiness and a squadron of Jaguar fighters has been allocated to NATO to await UN requests. Therefore, I believe that we are making a very sensible, very cautious, but very principled response to the humanitarian needs.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I also welcome the Minister to his new post and thank him for his statement.

Is it not the case that the situation is now fast descending into one of the utmost gravity? As the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) said earlier, we now face a position, which many of us have predicted for some time, which is simply beyond control. We may have to consider not just what more we can do, but the reality of the need to withdraw——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The right hon. Gentleman wanted them to go in before. He has come full circle.

Mr. Ashdown: Well, exactly so, and this has happened because we did not get a grip on this early enough.

I notice that the Minister did not comment on the very disturbing incident that took place in relation to the disarming and humiliation of British soldiers on the road from Travnik to Kiseljak. It is very easy to exercise outrage from the safety of 1,000 miles away. The fact is that those soldiers must have been placed in a very difficult position. I hope that the Minister will be able to assure the House that neither they nor their commanders will be blamed for the incident.

This was a humiliation waiting to happen. Our failure to provide a clear aim, as Manfred Woerner said, and to provide clear rules of engagement and a clear political aim has meant that UN troops—and British troops, among the finest in the theatre—have increasingly been treated with contempt by the Bosnian forces on both sides.

I hope that the Minister will realise that our soldiers on the ground, through humiliation or worse, will very soon have to pay a much more dangerous price because of the failure of will, politics, clarity and action on the part of this Government and others.

Mr. Skinner: I have never heard such a two-faced statement in my life. The right hon. Gentleman wanted more troops before. Now he wants them out.

Mr. Hanley: I am grateful for the welcome of the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown). However, I am somewhat puzzled by the stance that he is showing this morning. He was in the vanguard of those who wanted us to send more troops into the area. We answered the need in yesterday's statement in ensuring that troops were ready to go in, largely to protect our own troops carrying out their humanitarian responsibilities. It seems that the right hon. Gentleman has changed his mind because of yesterday's incident, which he called a humiliation.

It seems that the right hon. Gentleman, I am sure for the very best of motives, wants us to put in more troops, but as soon as they face any difficulty, they are to be withdrawn. The right hon. Gentleman mentioned yesterday's incident at Kiseljak. That was a totally unrelated incident in which two Spartan vehicles were stopped by Muslims at a roadblock near Kiseljak and were coerced at gunpoint into leaving their vehicles. They were then robbed of their weapons, ammunition and other equipment. They were released unharmed.

That was not a case of their rules of engagement being inadequate. They had to judge whether they should open fire and whether, if they had opened fire, they would have put the lives of their colleagues at greater risk. In very difficult circumstances, they decided to take what I regard as sensible actions. They are alive and their vehicles have been recovered. However, as I have stressed, that shows the difficulty of the situation in which our troops, in supporting the humanitarian aim, are bound to come under fire. They are bound to face difficulties of that sort.

Either we support the humanitarian aid and resolve with our troops and support them properly and have reserves on hand to protect them if necessary, or we get out. From what the right hon. Member for Yeovil said, I am not sure whether he wants us to withdraw now because he believes that we cannot continue. I wonder whether he would like to say whether he believes that the situation is now perhaps so bad that we should withdraw the troops and tell us what the consequences would then be. How then would humanitarian aid get through? The right hon. Gentleman should think again about what he has said.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): May I also welcome my hon. Friend to his new appointment and wish him the very best in the execution of his duties?

As the two incidents which followed so closely upon each other—the disarming of Royal Engineers, including the taking of general-purpose machine guns from the Spartan vehicles and the returning of fire by the members of the Prince of Wales Own Regiment of Yorkshire and the possible killing of Croat gunmen—involved different communities, does that not demonstrate that it would be very unwise for Her Majesty's Government to become more deeply militarily involved in this intractable, inter-communal conflict?

My hon. Friend the Minister referred to the possible deployment of additional British air power to the theatre and the sending of a Jaguar squadron. The use of air power in the circumstances that he described would be an exceedingly blunt intrument and would probably provoke retaliation, ambushes and further attacks on British troops. Will the Government reconsider, at the earliest possible date, the full aims, strategy and objectives of our involvement in Bosnia and the Yugoslav region?

Mr. Hanley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend whose knowledge of the Royal Air Force and its capabilities is probably second to none in the House. However, the use of air power would be as a last resort, probably for the very reasons that my hon. Friend gave. The consequences of using what is, as he said, an extremely blunt and very violent instrument would have to be weighed very carefully indeed. However, that air power is in reserve. It is in reserve—and I cannot stress this often enough to the House—to protect our own forces who are carrying out their humanitarian role. There is no escalation of the role of our forces. If the troops that we have in the area now, who are supported not just by the RAF but by the Royal Navy, need further protection to carry out their tasks or to withdraw, they will be given that protection. But there is no increase in our role. There is no change in our aims and objectives, which are to bring humanitarian aid to anyone in Bosnia-Herzegovina who needs it, from whatever part of that troubled community.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Should not the mandate of the United Nations now be extended so that more ground troops begin to be available for the protection of convoys, the attempt to seal the borders from Croatia and from Serbia and the protection of safe havens where the populations are fully defended? The United Nations forces are doing a fine job, but their mandate probably needs extending and the resources need to be added to considerably.

Mr. Hanley: I answered the hon. Gentleman's question earlier. There is no need at this stage, we believe, to increase further the United Nations mandate. The United Nations has our troops available to help to protect the forces of the UNPROFOR in carrying out its humanitarian role. Of course, we are considering each day any further initiatives that might help to improve the delivery of that humanitarian aid.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Will my hon. Friend ensure that a message of support goes to our troops who are carrying out very difficult tasks in the whole Yugoslav area, particularly in Travnik? Will he tell the House whether there is a CSCE mission that covers Travnik? If not, would it not help to see whether the civilian side of the CSCE missions might be able to do something to lower the tension? All right hon. and hon. Members want to see the tension lowered so that we neither have to withdraw nor necessarily send more troops but can carry out necessary humanitarian work under the United Nations and the British Government, properly and fully to feed so many starving people in that area.

Mr. Hanley: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his question. There is no CSCE mission in Travnik. There is one in Kosovo. We do not foresee any change of role there.

I thank my right hon. Friend particularly for his message to our troops who are carrying out what most people would agree is a desperately difficult task, and they are carrying it out with such superb professionalism that all of us are rightly proud of what they are doing. We would not put them to any greater risk than is necessary, but my right hon. Friend's thanks to them for carrying out their role are most important and gratifying, and I will make sure that they are passed on.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that, during these proceedings, Serbia has not been mentioned once? However, he will recall that, in preceding months when statements have been made about this matter, the blame has been laid on the Serbs from beginning to end.

Does not the series of incidents demonstrate, first, that the leader of the Liberal party got it wrong and does not have the grace to admit it and, secondly, for those who wanted to bomb the hell out of Serbia, that it is now apparent that the three contending forces—the Croats, the Serbs and Muslims—are all in battle together? Will he accept also——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is abusing the private notice question. I indicated that it is somewhat limited. I was very tolerant in allowing a little straying from the point, but the hon. Gentleman is going much too far.

Mr. Skinner: Does the Minister accept that the incident in which British troops were involved demonstrates that, instead of having more British troops there, and instead of carrying out the wishes of the German nation, it is time that they brought the troops out? One thing is certain: when there is a cocktail of religion and nationalism, war is not very far around the corner.

Mr. Hanley: The hon. Gentleman's comments have been greeted by the House, as they usually are, with a measure of disbelief and disrespect inasmuch as he has mentioned the Serbs. We did not mention the Serbs today for the simple reason that, to our knowledge, they were not involved in the two incidents. The Serbs are greatly responsible for a number of atrocities in that area. It is perhaps right that we should remember today that it is not merely the Serbs but the Croats and the Muslims—it is all sides of the terrible struggle—who are to blame not just for the incidents that we have seen in the past 24 hours but for many incidents over the past few months. It is a very difficult and intractable problem. The issues that we are dealing with today are about Novi Travnik, and that is why the Serbs were not mentioned in my statement.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): I am most concerned about the current situation on the ground in Travnik. From what my hon. Friend has said, it is clear that the judgment was that the convoy should not have gone because it was unwise to do so. The fact that it did so without protection speaks for itself. My concern is that the subsequent judgment to put British troops in the position of trying to deal with that convoy, which I understand was seven miles long and involved many vehicles—our own troops had about 12 vehicles—has put them in an impossible military position if the whole thing breaks down as a result of what has happened.

What I should like to hear from my hon. Friend is the repeated assurance that, whatever steps can be taken to ensure their position should the situation break down—I understand that it is impossible to get ground troops in to reinforce them because of the nature of the terrain—and to ensure that it is understood on the ground that those troops are trying to do a job for the United Nations and to protect that convoy in an impossible situation, the troops will have every support that we and the United Nations can offer, from wherever it needs to come.

Mr. Hanley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The United Nations protects any United Nations-organised convoys, but we cannot and could not protect every convoy that wants to travel, even though they are likely to be at very great risk. However, situations change. Of course, in this case UNPROFOR decided that this convoy should become official to protect those people who remained in it. It was a large convoy of humanitarian aid. Therefore, there is no need for me to expand upon my hon. Friend's wise words.

There is certainly no intention to pull out at this stage, for the simple reason, as I have said a number of times, that it is our duty to deliver humanitarian aid. There are people in great need. I am very surprised at the callous and selfish nature of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who believes that the delivery of humanitarian aid in such circumstances should be condemned.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Surely this incident reveals the self delusion that is at the heart of our current role in Bosnia. Humanitarian aid is aid. Food and medicine have military value—after all, armies march on their stomachs. Surely it is folly to think that, in an area where there had been heavy fighting with Muslim attacks on Croats, we could then have a Muslim convoy wandering around the area without stirring up trouble. Although we might consider ourselves to be neutral, if we intervene there we would be seen as intervening on one side. Please, in this situation, before we talk about adding additional resources, could we first reassess the objectives? Our present objectives are incoherent and self-delusory.

Mr. Hanley: I do not doubt the hon. Gentleman's sincerity in this matter, but I doubt whether he accepts that we are doing the very best that we can to help to deliver humanitarian aid, and that in itself is an aim; that is an objective. There is no muddling about that objective. There might be many decisions to take and various ways

in which we can help to deliver that aid, but it is the United Nations' role to try to make sure that what is needed is escorted and brought to those people.

It is a very difficult situation. We are not at war. What we are doing is supporting a humanitarian role, and I believe that that is a noble aim. If there is some insecurity, and if there are some parts of the policy that the hon. Gentleman finds unclear, it is purely because it is a very unclear matter. One has to react to difficult circumstances with every passing day. In the meantime, we are doing what we can to help that troubled area, and we will continue to do so as long as it is safe.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): My hon. Friend the Minister has eloquently stated the dangers that our troops face in a very worthy cause, which is to deliver or help to deliver humanitarian aid. Will my hon. Friend assure me that our troops will not be put in an impossible practical situation on the ground? However worthy the aim, the dangers will escalate.

Will my hon. Friend discuss with the Foreign Secretary and the Minister of State how NATO and the Western European Union can respond? There has been a lot of talk about how we might further protect our troops and ensure that our efforts in and around Travnik and elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia can be made more effective in our attempts to help the populations. But unless we back up current resources with extra resources, I am afraid that our forces will be put in an impossible situation. It is not fair that we politicians should demand that of the military.

Mr. Hanley: My hon. Friend neatly puts his finger on the heart of the dilemma. The safety of our troops is paramount; we keep it continuously under review. We have contingency plans to provide additional protection for our troops—they were announced yesterday—either to enable them to carry out their mission or to assist with a withdrawal, if it came to that. No one at this stage is contemplating a withdrawal of UNPROFOR, which has done, and continues to do, sterling work, and which has saved many thousands of lives. I believe that that is worth supporting.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Trying to stop people acting barbarously towards each other and slaughtering each other is an extraordinarily difficult task, but it is one which civilised nations should continue to pursue. The incident at Travnik clearly showed that it is only a matter of time before British troops are engaged in full-scale confrontation with one force or another. So it is time seriously to contemplate whether British forces will be withdrawn from the United Nations contingent or whether we will ask the United Nations massively to increase the number of troops on the ground—which it should have done a long time ago. My feeling is that we should ask the UN to do the latter. Will the Minister go to the Security Council to get a decision taken now, not when our troops inevitably start coming under fire?

Mr. Hanley: The United Nations is taking pains at this moment to try to increase the number of troops from the world community to help in the safe areas. I have said what our role is. We are proud of our membership of UNPROFOR and of the help we give it. I believe that UNPROFOR is proud of the professionalism which the British forces are devoting to its humanitarian effort.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): I wish my hon. Friend well in his new and already uncomfortable role. The two incidents that he described, particularly the second, which involved the humiliation and disarmament of British soldiers, surely illustrate once again that their role in Bosnia involves doing something that British soldiers have never before been asked to do. Tiny packets of soldiers, unprotected and unsupported, are operating in the middle of a bloody civil war. I put it to my hon. Friend that that cannot continue for much longer. I for one——

Madam Speaker: Order. I am afraid that hon. Members are indulging in debate. Much as we are interested in the hon. Gentleman's views, this is the time to question the Minister, not to make long statements.

Mr. Brazier: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Will my hon. Friend accept that this sort of humiliation and disarmament of British soldiers is unacceptable, and that we cannot keep them much longer in this sort of role?

Mr. Hanley: My hon. Friend has stated that the incident at Kiseljak was a humiliation. I would say that it shows the professionalism of British troops; they were using their heads rather than their guns. They have saved their lives; all of them returned from what could have been a difficult situation. Had any of them opened fire, one of their colleagues might have been killed. Details are still coming in and we are still studying the whole incident, but the fact that the troops returned and brought their vehicles with them shows their courage and commitment to carrying out a very difficult role. I do not regard that as a humiliation. These men were doing their duty and they lived to fight another day.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): I join other Members in welcoming the Minister to his new position.

Does the hon. Gentleman realise that on both sides of the House there is tremendous concern about the position in which British troops find themselves in Bosnia? Does he accept that matters will escalate, that lives will be lost and that there will be many more Travniks until the Government cease to recognise and to try to maintain that failed entity known as Bosnia?

Mr. Hanley: The situation there is serious, as we all understand. The fact that we have allocated to a state of higher readiness more troops in support of our forces carrying out their humanitarian role shows that we recognise what the right hon. Gentleman has said about the escalation of difficulties in Bosnia-Herzegovina. At the Ministry of Defence and at the FCO we day by day take account of the risks involved and of the capability to fulfil the humanitarian aim.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): I have served in the Army and have seen service in various positions and places. Further to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier), may I add that my concern is that, because of their reputation—it is well earned—there is a temptation to put British troops into impossible positions because of their known capabilities. I therefore urge my hon. Friend to assure the House that we will review certain recent actions so as to be certain that our soldiers are not being placed in invidious positions in which their role becomes impossible.

Mr. Hanley: My hon. Friend must be right to say that we should avoid placing our soldiers at undue risk—that

[Mr. Hanley]

is self-evident I disagreed with my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) about whether this was a humiliation. We could not have foreseen the incident. Apparently, a roadblock was put up by some Muslim soldiers, although the exact details have yet to come in. I would not have regarded that as an impossible position; nor could it have been foreseen—at least, no more than other dangers and difficulties can be foreseen in this unfortunate theatre. I stress that if lives are likely to be put at risk, that is done with the Government's permission and the sanction of the United Nations. We shall carefully examine every change in circumstances, such as the one to which the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) has rightly drawn attention.

This has been an important small debate—in effect—showing the seriousness with which the House treats this matter. I am pleased that my hon. Friend, whose professionalism is well known to us all, has drawn attention to the risks that our forces are undergoing in difficult circumstances to carry out their tremendous humanitarian role and the saving of many thousands of lives.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): Let me make it clear that our troops, who are operating in difficult and dangerous circumstances, not to take sides but to bring humanitarian relief to people in the most desperate circumstances, have the support and admiration of the Opposition.

I realise that the Minister's answers are effectively holding answers and that we shall have to return to this matter next week as the situation moves on, but his answers still will not do.

The Minister has been repeatedly asked to spell out the orders under which our troops, acting under the United Nations protection force, are operating. He must do so. He has confirmed that the convoy in question was not operating under the UN humanitarian aid programme. Is it acting against advice by heading into the dangerous battle zone in which it now finds itself? It must be incumbent on the Minister to explain the involvement of United Kingdom troops in the operation. What is to happen now? Will our troops be left in this dangerous situation, perhaps awaiting reprisals? Will they be reinforced—the Minister spoke about further troops being in readiness—or are they to be withdrawn to safety?

Mr. Hanley: I thought that I made it clear at the beginning of my answer to the original question that the convoy was not an official United Nations one and was therefore not being protected. Therefore, perhaps it was most unwise for it to proceed on its journey. The need for humanitarian aid in Tuzla is well understood and perhaps to some extent we cannot blame people for trying to make progress with this large convoy. I said that, following the incidents yesterday, UNPROFOR sent in 1 PWO to help, and from that moment the trucks were designated as a United Nations protected convoy. It remains such a convoy and it is now proceeding.

I have spoken repeatedly about the rules of enagement and they could not be clearer. Our troops are allowed to fire to protect their lives. If they come under fire and believe that they are in danger they are entitled to engage.

Points of Order

11.40 am

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. May I draw your attention to serious developments over the past 24 hours in the debate on the future of invalidity benefit—*[Interruption.]* I should like to make my point of order before the claque start to shout. These are serious developments for the future of invalidity benefit and the welfare state. We now know that fundamental changes—I think that is understating it—are contemplated to invalidity benefit eligibility with the intention of making sure that 20 per cent. of those who presently qualify will not qualify in future for the level of benefits—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. What is the point of order?

Mr. Dewar: I shall, of course, come to it, but it is important to outline the basis upon which I seek your help. We know that eligibility and the level of benefits are to be attacked and that taxation is to be imposed—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I am trying to listen to the hon. Gentleman whose point of order must be to me and must not give long explanations. He obviously wants to know whether our Standing Orders or our procedures are being abused. That is what points of order are about and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will come to the point right away.

Mr. Dewar: I will indeed, Madam Speaker. It is my understanding of at least the courtesies and probably the rules of the House that if repeated statements are totally incompatible with subsequent events—and that is true in terms of what the Prime Minister said in Wednesday's debate and what the Secretary of State for Social Security has repeatedly said—the proper course is for those who are responsible, for whatever reason, for misleading the House to come to the House and put the matter right at the first possible opportunity.

It is most important for the House and in terms of the anxieties, which cannot now be seen as groundless, among those who are in receipt of invalidity benefit, for an early statement to be made about the incompatibility, the yawning gap, between assurances that were offered and the reality of what is happening.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. Is it in order for an Opposition Member to allege that Ministers made misleading statements to the House when Ministers have spoken about what is in the national interest, namely, that a proper public expenditure review is being carried out and that nothing has been ruled in and nothing has been ruled out? Invalidity benefit cost about £800 million in 1979-80 and now costs——

Madam Speaker: Order.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Hon. Members must resume their seats. I can adequately deal with the point of order by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). The hon. Gentleman finally asked whether a Minister was coming to the House to make a statement. I have not been

told that a Minister is coming to the House this morning to make any statement. That is the end of that point of order and we shall now proceed with the debate.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is it a different point of order?

Sir Peter Emery: Yes.

Madam Speaker: In that case I must listen.

Sir Peter Emery: Can we not assist the Chair by ensuring that points of order are made properly and not abused in a way that seems to make your task more difficult? Surely all Front-Bench speakers should set an example and not attempt to abuse points of order.

Madam Speaker: I am always more than delighted when an hon. Member seeks to assist the Chair. That seldom happens to me.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I hope to do precisely that in my point of order, Madam Speaker. Is it correct that the procedures of the House put you and hon. Members in a somewhat anomalous position on Fridays, in that we are not allowed on that day to ask for an emergency debate on the Monday under Standing Order No. 20? That sometimes leads to ingenious points of order which are to your embarrassment and to ours. Bearing in mind the genuine concern expressed by the Opposition, may I, through you, ask Ministers who are present to relay to their colleagues in the Department of Social Security the Opposition request for, if not a debate, at least a statement on Monday?

Madam Speaker: I need hardly draw the attention of the House to the fact that two members of the Procedure Committee are present in the Chamber. I want no more points of order about procedure because I have dealt with that and we are about to return to an important debate.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is it on a different matter?

Mr. Barnes: Yes.

Madam Speaker: In that case I shall listen to it.

Mr. Barnes: It is about your authority in terms of what appears in or what is missing from *Hansard*. I asked a question about standard spending assessments being listed for England and they have been listed in detail per head of population, but not in *Hansard*. They have been placed in the Library, although *Hansard* often gives long answers involving detailed lists. The matter is important for Derbyshire because most of the authorities there, apart from Derby itself, fall in the middle or in the bottom part of the league table. It would be of great interest to my constituents to know that North-East Derbyshire is 295th out of 296 authorities. All the other authorities in what might be called the doughnut of Derbyshire have been established by the local government boundary commission and are abysmally low in the table. They include the authority in Derbyshiredale——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman's point of order is becoming a debate but I think that I understand his point. It is at the discretion of Ministers whether a lengthy answer—and the hon. Gentleman recognises that the one he mentions is lengthy—is printed in *Hansard*. or made available in the Library.

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is it a different point of order?

Mr. Mandelson: Yes. What is your authority and what are your powers to represent hon. Members who seek to question Ministers, in my case the Prime Minister? Before the Whitsun recess I put a question to the Prime Minister which was answered on his behalf by the Leader of the House. It was about Government proposals to introduce charges for hospital stays. On behalf of the Prime Minister, who was unavoidably detained with Her Majesty the Queen unveiling a statue, the Leader of the House gave an answer that was at variance with an answer by the Prime Minister on a previous occasion on the same subject.

I subsequently wrote to the Prime Minister asking where the truth lay in this matter and asked who spoke authoritatively for the Government, whether it was the Prime Minister on the former occasion or the Leader of the House subsequently. Despite the amount of time that has elapsed, the Prime Minister has not responded to my letter. I understand that the Prime Minister is preoccupied with the present——

Madam Speaker: Order. I have the hon. Gentleman's point. If he wishes to pursue the matter he could do so by way of further questions. I am sure that he will understand, as the House does, that I am not responsible for ensuring that letters are answered by the Prime Minister's office. I have a big enough job in my own office seeing that my letters are answered and I want no further responsibilities in that respect.

Before I call the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) to resume his speech, I must tell the House that a number of hon. Members are hoping to speak in the debate. I have been generous in allowing quite a long time for the private notice question. It was important and I wanted to allow sufficient time. I hope that I will now have the co-operation of hon. Members in not speaking for too long and in exercising self-restraint so that I can call all those who wish to speak.

Manufacturing (Productivity)

Question again proposed, That this House do now adjourn.

Mr. Cox: I was explaining to the House that in 1979 more than 7 million people were employed in the United Kingdom manufacturing industry. That figure has now dropped to 4·5 million. Indeed, last year well over 200,000 manufacturing jobs were lost. Our major companies such as ICI, Ford, Rolls-Royce and British Aerospace are now shedding jobs. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) said, this country is not taking the action or making the effort required to revitalise our manufacturing base.

The Economist recently published a survey showing that the United Kingdom trade deficit in manufactured goods will reach £17 billion this year, compared with a surplus of £5 billion in 1982. That can be described only as a dramatic and devastating decline over the past 10 years. In April 1993, just a couple of months ago, the Association of London Authorities published a report named "Business Failures in London". It showed that 11,000 more businesses folded than were established in the Greater London area in 1992.

On 28 April, a delegation from the London boroughs, together with London business leaders, went to Brussels to lobby the European Commissioner about European regional aid for London. As a London Member, I find it unbelievable that our capital city has to lobby for European regional aid. All hon. Members should think about that. Against that background, how does London fit with the Minister's claims this morning—and which we hear constantly from Ministers—that there are enormous improvements throughout the country?

I have been privileged to be a Member of this House for 23 years. When I came to the House there were massive employment opportunities in London. Many industrial complexes were offering all sorts of work and making goods that were selling throughout the world. Any hon. Member who doubts the seriousness of the present position in London and, indeed, in may other areas in the south, should read the report in *The Economist* of the survey by the Henley centre for forecasting. That shows clear evidence of the current position in London.

The Economist states:

"The Henley Centre report 'The Case for London' argues that London is more than eligible enough for 'special case' consideration under the new criteria for European Community Objective Two Status—the European Regional Development Fund. If successful, the bid could be worth £100 million to London . . . Henley says that only 17·8 per cent. of London employees work in industry, compared with an EC average of 33·2 per cent. and a UK average of 32·8 per cent. Only 12·7 per cent. of London employees are in manufacturing, compared with a UK average of 23·1 per cent."

I suggest that hon. Members take note of another comment in the report—that in the early 1980s seven people were chasing every job vacancy in London; now, 57 people are chasing every one. The report also points out that in the London area during that same period well over 700,000 industrial jobs were lost. That is the background to the plight of London.

The Henley report stated:

"The London Boroughs Association vice-chairman of policy and resources, Councillor Andrew Boff, who will be in Brussels added: 'It is not often that Labour and Conservative politicians, the trade unions and businessmen come together to speak with one voice. It shows that right across the spectrum there is agreement that London should be given Objective Two status.'"

As a London Member I would welcome—as I am sure other London Members would—£100 million for London. It would certainly revitalise the areas where there has been the greatest decline. However, I repeat that I find it unbelievable that the capital city of this country has to go cap-in-hand to Brussels to ask for some of the regional development fund. That is the indictment of the people of London against the Government.

In response to Madam Speaker's request for short speeches, I shall not make some of the comments that I had intended to make. However, some comments need to be made. Ministers repeatedly say that they back British industry. Let us consider a couple of recent examples. They really backed the coal mining industry. It was a total commitment to looking after British industry and British jobs. The Minister has a mining background and I grew up in south Wales. He knows that one of the industry's great achievements was its ability to sell mining equipment throughout the world.

I recently met a delegation from Chile, which is holding a large mining exhibition next year. I was asked whether British mining companies would be there. I hope that they will be, but we all know that when a major industry collapses—as, sadly, the British mining industry has done as a result of Government policies—other sectors dependent on that industry do not have long-term prospects.

What about Leyland-DAF? It appears that that company will be saved, but not thanks to our Government. By contrast, our European partners said that they would do all that they could to help any Leyland-DAF bases in their countries.

Many of those who came to the House from an industrial background took great pride in the number of apprenticeships offered to young people. In 1979, more than 150,000 apprenticeships were offered across the whole range of industries. In 1991, the figure was down to little more than 50,000. We are frequently told, as we were this morning, that one of Britain's greatest problems is its lack of a skilled work force—yet year by year, we see a decline in the apprenticeship opportunities offered to young people.

My hon. Friend the member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and I are members of the British delegation to the Council of Europe and both serve on its social and health committee, which discusses work, social and health issues of crucial importance to this country and to many others. If the Minister is so confident of the Government's achievements, I hope that he will accept an invitation later this year or early next year to address that committee in the same glowing terms that he used today, and say how wonderful everything is with British industry. He would be listened to with rapturous attention.

Before the Minister does that, he ought to do some homework—because high on the committee's priorities would be an explanation from the Minister as to the Government's social dumping policy. The committee comprises parliamentarians from all member states. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West and I, and Conservative Members who serve on the committee too, are often asked to justify the social dumping that this Government encourage, and which is costing jobs in other member states.

I hope that the Minister accepts my invitation. I assure him that our French and German colleagues are dead keen to know how he justifies the Government's current policy, which is much to the detriment and annoyance of our European colleagues.

The chairman of the 1922 committee, interviewed on radio this morning, was asked about last night's meeting. He said that it was wonderful, and that everybody there fully supported the Prime Minister. He suggested that the Government's real problem is presentation. He said, "Our policies are superb. We all agree that everything is remarkably well now, but our presentation is wrong." Conservative Members know as well as we and the public do that what is really wrong is not the Government's presentation—though I agree that is not good—but the policies that they have pursued for so long.

If everything is so good, why is Britain in such an economic mess? I hope that we shall be told the reasons. Above all, I ask the Minister and his officials to accept my invitation, which I know my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West would also extend, to address the Council of Europe's social and health committee. We look forward to that with great interest. We would not have to say anything, for our European colleagues would have a field day with the Minister.

12.3 pm

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): We as a party have an excellent story to tell. I welcome my hon. Friend the Minister to his new appointment. I was privileged to work with him as a Parliamentary Private Secretary for the past year and know what an excellent Minister he is.

Between leaving university and becoming a Member of Parliament, I worked in industry and subsequently for consultants to industry. I welcome this debate not only because of my own background but because, contrary to popular perception, manufacturing forms an important part of employment in my constituency. Canterbury has the world's best leather company. The leather on which we sit in the House of Commons, the leather in the White House and the leather in Rolls-Royces all comes from Canterbury.

My constituency is also the home of the world's number one specialist papermaker, in terms of both turnover and quality. The trading estates in Whitstable, in the north of my constituency, include a company which exports electrical parts to Taiwan, and Amphenol, which is a leading supplier of connectors to the computer industry. At a new Joseph Wilson industrial estate in Whitstable every site has been let despite the recession.

The hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) made a plea for London. There is a fair regional point to be made in that respect. Because money has been poured, through various forms of selective aid, into the more distant parts of the United Kingdom, London and the south-east have done less well in relative terms in some respects and now have high unemploymnet levels. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will echo those of us in south-east England who argue for development status to be moved from areas that now have low unemployment—although one would not believe that, listening to the whingeing by Members of Parliament who represent those constituencies—and into areas that genuinely need help. Even without that assistance, companies in my constituency are putting in a remarkable performance.

The hon. Member for Tooting spoke about going cap-in-hand to Brussels for handouts. I remind him that he supports a party that, when last in government, went cap-in-hand not for regional development funds from a perfectly legitimate source but to the International Monetary Fund, for a loan to bail out the country.

My speech divides into three parts. First, I shall address the general economic situation and the monetary climate, which is central to manufacturing; areas in which the Government have sought, rightly, to improve our manufacturing performance; and a specialist area of particular interest to me, which is much underrated as a factor in the manufacturing economy.

As to the general economic situation and the monetary situation in particular, we should not delude ourselves that the monetary climate set for businesses is the most important factor in their ability to be successful. We are right to be proud that inflation is at its lowest level for a generation and—when we see deepening recession in the rest of Europe—to be pleased that recovery is under way. In this debate, we have particular reason to take pride in the remarkable achievements made in manufacturing productivity and export growth.

The key monetary question for manufacturing industry and the service sector, but particularly the former, is how we decide which way to move the main monetary lever of interest rates. We have chosen broadly the right criteria. They are the money supply figures, to which I tend to give most weight, the exchange rate and asset prices. I would add labour costs and the position in our key export markets, as that knocks on into capacity and potentially into the scope for non-inflationary growth.

It is clear which way we should move the main monetary lever. The broader measure of money is at a very low level, at 3·5 per cent. growth. It is true that the narrow measure is at the top of our range at about 4 per cent., but I suggest that the range itself is rather tight—and anyway, the narrow measure is falling.

The most important asset prices are those for houses and commercial property. House prices are important because of the influence that they have on the willingness of many households to spend. Our banking sector is so heavily lent to the commercial property sector that commercial property prices are profoundly important to the willingness of bankers to lend. I welcome lower house prices for those young people who want to buy houses and the last thing that I want to see is property price inflation. We should realise that there is no danger of an inflationary take-off in either of those two areas.

The exchange rate fell from its unsustainably high level in the ERM to a much lower level, but it has come back part of the way since then. There is no great fear of an inflationary take-off. Those people who were saying a few months ago that it could happen have largely been proved wrong. What we have seen is that those people in the United Kingdom who are selling imports have had to accept lower margins—they have not been able to increase their prices.

The next item on the list is the situation in our export markets. As I said, we have already seen a fall in demand in most of our main European trading partners and a slowdown in recovery in the United States. That suggests that there may be difficulties that are not of our making. The final matter affecting monetary policy is unit wage costs, which are at an exceptionally good level at present. Indeed, they are falling slightly, which is a remarkable

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achievement and an important quasi-monetary indicator. The whole list points in the same direction. We should be thinking about easing the money supply, rather than tightening it. If we want one strong case this morning against an independent Bank of England, it is that the Bank of England is saying that the worries are in the other direction at present.

I shall focus more specifically on the manufacturing economy. I suggest that the Government have achieved a remarkable transformation in a whole range of different areas. We have freed up the labour market from the level of strikes that made us the laughing stock of Europe with the British diseases of le "tea-break" and le "time-to-down-tools". We now have the lowest level of strikes for a century. Much more significant than that—because people can say that it is a fear of unemployment and so on—is that just before the recession started we had the lowest level for 20 years.

The hon. Member for Tooting mentioned the decline in apprenticeships. When a large number of apprenticeships were tied in, sadly, to the industries of the past, there was bound to be a decline in the traditional form of apprenticeships, but the expansion in the new forms of vocational qualifications and the availability of training places to all school leavers in the United Kingdom is the way forward.

Export support is another important area. The interim report published yesterday by the Engineering Employers Federation is a thoroughly positive document which commends a whole list of different areas of the Government from the Prime Minister's support to the work of the DTI and many other Departments, including the Department of Employment. In the report, the federation specifically picks out the expansion of ECGD cover as one of the areas on which the Government must be congratulated.

Another area in which the Government are moving policy forward is a new attempt to forge a partnership with industry. No one wants to see us return to the corporatist days of the 1960s and 1970s when we had the absurd situation of Government Ministers and civil servants trying to guess winners and back them. There should be a partnership to discuss a whole range of issues such as training, export support and science and technology. That brings me to the welcome publication of "Realising our Potential" by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. My hon. Friend the Minister said quite a lot about it and picked out almost exactly the points that I was going to make. Therefore, I will not repeat what he said beyond saying that the annual review is important.

Mr. Cousins: Does the hon. Gentleman share my concern that, alone among the industrial countries, spending on research and development by businesses in the United Kingdom has fallen, whereas in every other industrial country it rose in the 1980s?

Mr. Brazier: The short answer is yes—the longer answer is that the hon. Gentleman should wait about five minutes because I shall come to that point.

Another area in which the Government have assisted industry enormously is tax reform. We have a much lower corporate tax rate and a simplified tax regime. The final item on the long list is the deregulation initiative. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister will sympathise with me on this point. It is important for the deregulation initiative to succeed and be seen to succeed because there is a strong feeling among many business men in my constituency and in constituencies up and down the country that there is a tendency for Brussels and Whitehall to regulate about it if they can see it. The deregulation initiative is exactly what is needed to separate our essential requirements for health, safety and consumers from those that are essentially unnecessary.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Does my hon. Friend agree that cost compliance on new regulation is an extremely important part of the package?

Mr. Brazier: That is a most important point and I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making it.

I shall focus on an area that is underrated in terms of its importance for manufacturing industry in the United Kingdom, although it applies to a lesser extent in some other types of business. It is the issue of ownership. Immediately before I entered the House I worked for a Swedish consulting company. Almost all its clients were in manufacturing industry of one sort of another. I was struck by the strength of the charge—it is a less serious charge now than it was 10 or 12 years ago—that many British industrial companies still have an outlook that is too short. The point made by the hon. Member for Tooting is just one illustration of that.

We have a record of low commercial research and development spending in many sectors, but there are some honourable exceptions. The pharmaceutical and aerospace industries have excellent records on industrial research and development spending. However, too many sectors in manufacturing industry are not spending enough of their money on research and development. On other occasions, I have bored the House by looking at the state of our patent laws. We partially addressed that with previous patent legislation. One reason why the pharmaceutical industry is such a good exception is that its patent law is in a good state compared with other areas, so it had a much better incentive to invest.

In the third and final section of my speech I shall focus on the issue of ownership. The best United Kingdom client that we had in the consulting firm for which I worked was JCB. The reason why it was the best United Kingdom client and was willing to look ahead any number of years ahead was that it had one shareholder. If that shareholder, Mr. Bamford, wanted to take a long-term view, he did not have to look over his shoulder. This is not simply an appeal for family companies—it goes wider than that, although the family business is a vital part of our economy. The recent measures taken by the Government through changes to the inheritance tax law in the past two or three Budgets are important and encouraging.

Mr. Tony Banks: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will develop what he said about Mr. Bamford not having to look over his shoulder, because I thought that the Government's policy was to increase share ownership in the United Kingdom. It is not encouraging news for those people who have bought shares to know that a Conservative Member believes that all companies should be reduced to having one shareholder, unless the hon. Gentleman did not mean to say that at all.

Mr. Brazier: The hon. Gentleman has anticipated almost exactly the point I was next going to make.

I am not arguing just for family ownership. There are several effective ways of owning a company that ensure that it has a long-term perspective. In the capitalist world, the three most common successful ones are, first, family ownership, secondly, widespread individual ownership, with individual shareholders giving the directors a tough time at annual general meetings, and, thirdly, there is a method that is not used much in this country but which is practised widely on the continent: banks can have strong regional links. They take a long-term view and own substantial chunks of companies.

The worst possible form of ownership—unfortunately, there is too much of this in the United Kingdom—is that of the faceless pension fund. The trustees are legally compelled to focus on the immediate financial return. They rarely play an active role in the direction of a company's affairs. They seldom ask tough questions at annual general meetings. They seldom sack directors. That has resulted, in some of our less good companies, in directors being allowed to believe that they are the masters of those companies, not the stewards of the owners. A capitalist system where that is allowed to happen immediately becomes less effective.

The result is that directors vote themselves enormous pay rises, even though they have not earned them by improved performance. I do not begrudge Lord King a single penny of his pay rises, because he made a remarkable success of his business. However, I object to companies whose profits have slumped giving the managing director a 50 per cent. pay rise. That has to be compared with the position in Japan, where directors are often paid modest salaries.

Short-termism can also be seen in scientific research and in takeovers. All too often, one company acquires another company, not to benefit the shareholders but because it enlarges the power base and empire of that company. My former employers carried out a survey of acquisitions within one segment of the European Community which showed that the vast majority of acquisitions did not benefit shareholders except where the acquisitions were in the same business and designed to increase market share.

This is the dog that did not bark. This is the hidden area of industrial policy—the ownership issue. I have two suggestions to make, both of which are fairly radical. First, we should grasp the nettle, use the size of the public sector borrowing requirement as an excuse and end, once and for all, the tax advantages that pension funds have over individual investors. Either we should bring the rights of the person who wants to manage his own savings for retirement up to the level of the pension funds, or we should lower the tax advantages that the pension funds enjoy to the same level as those of the individual saver. We should end the enormous advantage that institutional investors have in the investment markets.

Secondly, we should tighten the law on takeovers. The right way for a healthy market to operate is by companies competing vigorously against each other. Healthy competition is not encouraged if companies are simply allowed to buy up other companies. In some cases, sleepy companies that just happen to be big, for historic reasons, are allowed to buy small but dynamic companies which are then sometimes ruined. A much more difficult climate for takeovers should be created. We have one of the easiest climates for takeovers in the developed world. Having done business with companies in America, which we think of as an extremely capitalist economy, I know that it is much more difficult for companies to be taken over there as a result of the Clayton Act and the Hart-Scott Rodino amendment than it is in this country.

I end by repeating what I said at the beginning of my speech: we hear a lot of gloom and doom from the Opposition. It must be intensely painful for them to see, despite all their gloomy predictions, the British economy recovering while the rest of Europe goes into recession. It must also be intensely painful for the Opposition to see that inflation is down below 2 per cent. They must be very embarrassed by the strong performance of so many good British businesses, including many in my constituency. We have every reason to be confident in the splendid team that we have in the Department of Trade and Industry, which will be playing such an important role in developing this initiative.

12.25 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Long ago, in the mists of parliamentary time—to be precise, on a Friday in 1962—I was given advice by James Chuter-Ede, then aged 80—he of the 1944 Butler-Ede Education Act and, indeed, Mr. Attlee's Home Secretary. "Laddie," he said—he called any hon. Member under the age of 50 "laddie", for he was a figure in a black coat and wing collar and he was a very wise man—"if you want to put an unpopular case before the House, do it on a Friday."

Today I wish to deploy an argument which, I confess readily to the Minister, is as unacceptable to the Opposition Front Bench as it is to the Government: that British manufacturing industry is being greatly disadvantaged by the imposition of United Nations sanctions against two of our best traditional markets, Iraq and Libya.

I had better be candid with the House. If a person has been to a country where a visit might be considered to be controversial, he is wise to make clear to his colleagues the basis upon which he went. I personally paid the £375 air fare to Oman and the £300 that I gave for his organisation, Friendship Across Frontiers, to Riad-El-Taher, a British national of Iraqi origin from Basra who lives in Esher. The £300 covered the 15-hour journey across the desert from Amman to Baghdad and various other things that were necessary during eight days in Iraq.

The Minister ought to be careful before rebuking me for going. The former Conservative Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir. E. Heath), to whom I reported in some detail, said that he fully approved of my having gone. The Foreign Secretary, who was kind enough to give me half an hour alone in his room, although he asked me a number of searching questions, as one might expect, and legitimately so, said, "Look, I am not criticising you for going." The Foreign Secretary personally made that quite clear. I thank the Leader of the House for declining to denounce me. On 24 May, I received a letter from the Prime Minister:

> "Dear Tam,
>
> I understand you rang Alex Allen asking if you and George Galloway could see me following your visit to Iraq. I should have been very interested to hear what you had to say but I am afraid my diary for the next few days is already over-committed. I know you are meeting Douglas Hurd later in the week and I will ask him to let me

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> know what you tell him. If, having seen him, you still think a meeting with me would be useful I would be happy to try and fit one in, I would have thought later on."

I am not threatening the Minister because I would not do such a thing, but, depending on what he says in reply to the debate and on any letter that he might write, I shall have to decide whether to accept the kind offer of the Prime Minister.

I did not let any of my colleagues, even my own Chief Whip, know that I was going because the trip would then have been about the British prisoners, which was not the object of the visit. I reported fully for four and a half hours in a debriefing at the excellent embassy in Amman. A great deal of information is available to the Department of Trade and Industry and the Foreign Office.

I say that British industry is disadvantaged because in the Al-Rashid hotel one could hardly get a meal early in the morning without tripping over representatives of Elf Aquitaine, Total, Japanese companies and many other business people wishing to re-establish relations with Iraq. I am sad that our manufacturing industry is likely to be disadvantaged not only now but in the future when the manufacturing industries and representatives of other countries supposedly party to sanctions are taking a very different view.

The French said that they are preparing plans simply for when sanctions are lifted. I hear that Paris is already pouring money into the development of the Majnoom field. It is open to question whether, technically, that is sanctions busting, but my first request is that the Department of Trade and Industry asks its representatives in Amman for their assessment of what other people are doing in relation to sanctions.

What do sanctions achieve? It is not part of this debate, although I would argue it elsewhere, but they are strengthening the position of Saddam Hussein. Sanctions are having the reverse effect from what was intended, apart from being immoral in relation to Iraqi children, the vulnerable and the elderly. Secondly, they are damaging British manufacturing industry. Before 1990, Iraq was one of the United Kingdom's biggest and best markets, partly because many of the Iraqis who were in a position to order were graduates of our universities.

At one point, my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) looked around a room containing some 16 people and said, "It is quite clear that I am the only person in this room who is not a graduate of a British university." Our host was a photochemist trained at the University of East Anglia. Graduates came from Manchester university, the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, Leeds, Strathclyde, Bath, Newcastle, Southampton and the London school of oriental studies.

I travelled back from the Shi'ite shrines at Karbala with someone who had been taught at the UMIST of Vivian Bowden and Colin Adamson, professor of electronics, and himself an electronic engineer. He said: "It is all so sad. You have invested as a country more than anybody else in Iraqi graduates. You are not getting the benefit of your investment."

Sanctions have hitherto been all pervasive. For example, there is no carbon for passport forms. There is no lead for pencils, which are not allowed to be imported. If anybody thinks that one went on a jolly, I can say only that in sweltering Basra and Baghad one did not swim simply because there was no chlorine. Chlorine is forbidden as an import.

In pursuing sanctions, it seems that we are going for the windpipe of a society, but, in spite of events, some graduates are still full of potential good will. They point out that they would like to do Britain a favour because Iraqis speak English but not German or Japanese. They have received a training and want to order items that are familiar. Soon the situation will become so bitter that the process will be irreversible.

Let me put it this way; what is a 10 to 15-year-old who sees his brother or sister dying for want of pharmacological products readily available from traditional manufacturers in Britain to think for the rest of his life? I do not wish to be maudlin, but I visited two hospitals in which I saw babies expiring for want of medicines that could have been imported. I was shattered. I know that it is said that sanctions allow the importation of medicines, but I found the Foreign Secretary genuinely bewildered about that point.

My certainty is that there is a heck of a shortage of medicines, and large number of babies are dying. I saw it with my own eyes, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Hillhead and the one journalist whom we took with us, Tim Llewellyn who, for nearly a quarter of a century, has been the veteran, hard-boiled middle east correspondent for the BBC. In such a situation, one would not be thinking about resolutions 706 or 712 or any other United Nations resolution if one were an Iraqi; one would have developed a gut resentment.

Anyone who believes that the regime of Saddam Hussein will be toppled by such a policy had better think again. People who were not Baathists but who were part of the biggest and most sophisticated middle class in the middle east are horrified at the propect of the breakdown of law and order which Saddam Hussein and his regime represent. They ask why the situation is allowed to continue. After all, by the winter of 1945 the Marshall plan was under way in Germany and yet we are putting the Iraquis through this.

I wish to raise specific issues. I hope that the Minister will ask into his office Peter Mayne, who, I understand, is the head of the sanctions unit in his Department. I want him to ask about a number of specific items. The first relates to sanctions and agriculture. The disruption caused by the embargo includes the lack of fertilisers, the inability to apply pesticides by aerial spraying, the lack of replacement parts for irrigation, harvesting and processing equipment, the displacement of populations, including migrant workers. The war caused damage to power stations, the disruption of transportation and a reduction in the crops harvest to an estimated 25 to 30 per cent. of the previous year.

An additional problem has been caused by damage to irrigation equipment. Although the extensive rivers system provides an abundant water source for irrigation, the soil salinity is high in the south, requiring proper irrigation and soil drainage practices which are essential to the maintenance of soil facility. Fluctuations in electricity supplies caused by wartime damage to power plants and a lack of spare parts have destroyed many electrically driven irrigation pumps in southern Iraq. While travelling on the road from Kuf to Basra, my hon. Friend for Hillhead and I saw that with our own eyes.

Iraq's animal production sector has also been seriously affected by economic sanctions. Veterinary services have been paralysed due to the lack of medicine, laboratory materials and vaccines. Outbreaks of vaccine-preventable rinderpest have plagued herds. We saw some of that. My first question concerns sanctions in agriculture. Will the Department of Trade and Industry have a discussion with Peter Mayne and his colleagues about the effect of those sanctions and whether that effect is part of the purpose of UN policies?

My second question concerns sanctions on arms. The Iraqis put it this way: "The west is in the position of a drug pusher. Do you suggest that you now think that we should have refused to buy the arms that you were so enthusiastically trying to sell us?" The truth is that we, the Americans, the Chileans, the French and the Germans sold Saddam Hussein the wherewithal for mass destruction and then blamed the Iraqis for buying the arms.

I have spent a morning at the Scott inquiry. Undoubtedly, Sir Richard Scott and his colleagues will come to some conclusions. Many of us knew perfectly well that the arms sales were taking place. We acquiesced because we did not want the Iraqis to be defeated by the mullahs, by Ayatollah Khomeini and by militant Iran. The whole circumstances of the beginning of the conflict were complicated.

As Tariq Aziz put it to us in an interview that was supposed to last for half an hour, but which went on at his request for one hour and 50 minutes, "You dined us and we dined you, and then you could not talk to us properly." I am not suggesting, for heaven's sake, that we sell the Iraqis arms. However, the arms issue should not exclude other considerations.

My third question concerns the operation of sanctions and health. I need not repeat the questions in relation to Glaxo about which I want the Minister to talk to his advisers. However, I ask specifically about insulin. I was told by one of my hosts that his 10-year-old daughter had diabetes. He spends his time not in the Iraqi Foreign Office, but scraping around trying to find insulin. At 600 dinars an injection, the cost is crippling. The Iraqis do not have scanners, and syringes have to be used two or three times. As one who comes from the Edinburgh area, I know that if one uses syringes more than once or twice, one expects AIDs to spread, for God's sake. AIDs is now developing in the river valleys—it is a very taboo subject in the Arab world—in a way that never happened before. Disease knows no frontiers. Malaria, which had been eradicated, has been re-established. Paratyphoid is back, kwashiorkor is up 29 times and marasmus is up 24 times. One could go on and on with the statistics produced by the Canadian doctor Eric Hoskins and others.

The sanctions committee, in which the lead Department is the DTI, must consider whether it should really ban radio isotopes for diagnostic equipment, whether it should ban ammonium nitrate and nitrous oxide, which are used in caesarian operations, and whether it should ban anaesthetics. If we do so, we create a major health problem. Almost 100,000 children more than the expected number have died since the beginning of the Gulf war. The post-war death rate is estimated at triple the pre-war rate. Many of the child deaths were due to diarrhoeal disease caused by contaminated water supplies. There has been a resurgence of vaccine-preventable diseases, including polio, diphtheria and measles. Water and sanitation services are absolutely critical. War damage and breakdowns go largely unrepaired because of a lack of vital spare parts and of technological input. The Minister ought to ask the sanctions committee about spare parts, hundreds of millions of dollars-worth of which are required to restore water quality and quantity to their pre-war levels. Sewage is dumped untreated into all major rivers—the source of drinking water. Seeing the pollution of those two great rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates, one can only say, "My God!" We saw towns flooded with raw sewage, increasing health hazards. Environmental damage is severe. I had a briefing from the wife of the director of Kew, but I hardly dared ask about environmental damage for fear that I would get the answer, "You are concerned about birds and animals. What about human beings?" It became so embarrassing that I did not pursue the matter.

The sanctions committee must consider that matter and —for all the United Nations resolutions—the fact that on 20 November 1989 the United Nations general assembly adopted the convention on the rights of the child, article 38 of which states:

"In accordance with their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect the civilian population in armed conflicts, States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure the protection and care of children who are affected by an armed conflict."

My friend Tim Llewellyn and I talked at length to representatives of the United Nations Childrens Fund, who told us, "We have combative inoculations throughout the world, yet in Iraq, we are encouraging the conditions that create cholera. There are now no inoculations against rabies." Is that really the intention of the United Nations body? I cannot believe that it is.

I come to the question of sanctions and the meat-processing industries. A lot of people who could be called relatively well off—let alone poorer people—have not had meat for three months. The Abu Ghurib milk factory was destroyed and that has had an effect on nursing mothers.

We are creating a generation who will grow up absolutely hating the west. Quite apart from anything else, Iraq has the second largest—and, in future, arguably the largest—oil reserves in the world. To put the matter at its basest—frankly I care more at the moment about the humanitarian issues—we must ask ourselves how our behaviour will help British industry in future.

It would be improper to deploy the political case against sanctions, except by saying—the Foreign Secretary listened carefully and said that he would consider my point —that, if the reason for sanctions is the so-called suppression of the marsh Arabs, the Government should perhaps think again. My hon. Friend the Member for Hillhead and I visited both villages to which we were taken and villages where we were completely unexpected, to which we insisted on going and I can say that I do not believe that such suppression is taking place. I cannot talk about the Kurds, although the Iraqi Foreign Minister said, "There is a Kurdish problem in the north." The impressive Health Minister, Dr. Mubarak, is himself a Kurdish doctor and, when we were asked to address the Iraqi Parliament we met quite a number of authentic Kurdish representatives. What I am saying is that the whole basis for sanctions is open to considerable question.

What of sanctions and pollution? One sees black smoke belching from the refineries that have been put back together, but there are no separation chemicals for the

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separation of gas and oil that is necessary. Pollution is leading to a dramatic increase in the abortion rate and in the number of malformed foetuses. In particular, I ask the Minister to relent on the question of the export of nylon thread, which is one of the materials that are really necessary if some kind of anti-pollution measures are to be implemented.

We must also consider the question of sanctions and power cuts. Sanctions have played a direct role in perpetuating low coverage rates and hence in encouraging outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases. Freezers, generators and other cold chain equipment damaged or destroyed during the Gulf crisis have, in many cases, still not been replaced or repaired due to restrictions on the import of supplies and equipment.

The ban on commercial air traffic has made the safe and timely delivery of vaccines difficult. Most vaccines and vaccination supplies are brought by truck along the 1,000 km Amman-Baghdad road which potentially affects their shelf life and potency. As I have twice covered that road there and back, I can easily imagine how exceedingly difficult that all is.

Recent vaccination campaigns have reduced the risks of full-scale epidemics, but the expanded programme of immunisation has been weakened due to the war and sanctions and will require considerable material input before it can regain its pre-war status and capacity.

Let me be clear about this. I am not asking for British taxpayers' money. I am asking for a decision to unfreeze assets that are here. Considerable Iraqi-owned assets could be unfrozen. This is not Somalia or one of the many countries in which there are parlous situations and where there is no money. There is money to be had in respect of Iraq. It is a matter of governmental decisions on the unfreezing of assets. It is not a matter of simply trying to ask for more and more from the overseas aid fund.

We must also consider the issue of sanctions and tyres. One sees bald tyres throughout the area and they make transport dangerous. Above all, there is a need for water purification equipment. Chlorine, pumps, motors, control panels, chlorinators, steel collars and pipes, laboratory equipment and various kinds of chemical agents are required.

British industry would be more than willing to supply those items. It has been more than willing to supply some of the learned journals of which Iraqi doctors say that they are starved. It is very difficult for people who have been brought up with sophisticated equipment to find, once they are deprived of that sophisticated equipment, that they must diagnose in an old-fashioned way which they are not used to.

It may be said that all those problems could be solved if Iraq were to accede to certain United Nations terms. Bluntly, having been to the country, I know that no Iraqi Government of any kind, let alone the present regime, could accede to United Nations terms which give the total priority to recompensing Kuwait. As the Iraqis put it, "What is the choice? Dying Iraqi children or fat Kuwaitis?"

Iraq is an ingenious country. The Iraqis repaired the faxes and telexes in southern Iraq and Basra quicker than the Americans did for the Kuwaitis. Perhaps the west does not like the idea of Iraq being a modern nation. Iraq was a modern nation in 1990. If we believe that we will be able to resolve the situation by bypassing the Iraqi Establishment, we must think again.

In respect of Iraq, I conclude with a simple thought. The supply and marketing of much of the world's oil in 20 years' time will be run by the children of those who are suffering as a result of the sanctions now. It is felt more and more that sanctions are being oriented, as the Iraqis put it, "to kill our children." I have a constructive suggestion, and it is the one that was foremost in a two-hour meeting—again, scheduled for half an hour—with the very able Iraqi Foreign Minister. Please do not think for a moment that those who serve Saddam Hussein are thugs or men of little ability. On every occasion, the people whom we met were impressive. That is not only my judgment, it is the judgment of Tim Llewellyn and of Riad El Taher. Indeed, it is the judgment of my hon. Friend the Member for Hillhead.

The Iraqi Foreign Minister asked us to sit down at a diplomatic and trade level and go through point by point ways in which sanctions at least could be alleviated. It would greatly be to the long-term advantage of British industry if that were done.

The hon. Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) mentioned Libya. For time reasons, I shall not pursue the point, other than to say that the Libyans believe that more than 800 of their citizens have died because of a United Nations air embargo which was imposed because of the 1988 Lockerbie bombing. It has not been possible, they argue, to send abroad 5,445 critically ill patients—that is, cardiac patients, kidney transplant patients, and patients requiring brain surgery—who would formerly have been transported by air ambulance.

Not only are there the arguments in relation to the motor industry, which were mentioned by the hon. Gentleman, but I will take lessons from nobody on the horror of Lockerbie. I went there. It was cleared up by police from my area. It was the biggest crime against civilians in the western world since 1945. However, the idea that those two accused Libyans sat down in a cafe and said, "What shall we do? Shall we commit that awful crime just by ourselves?" is absolutely preposterous. As Kate Adie put it to me—she had met them—they were footmen. The truth is that that crime was dreamed up in Tehran, in vengeance for the shooting down of the Iranian airliner by the USS Vincennes. Much of the matter was executed where they had the celebratory party in Damascus, and it looks like scapegoating the Libyans—taking it out on them.

The Government should talk to Dick Morris, the former chairman of Nirex, who is particularly involved in Brown and Root, and other engineering concerns that were doing some business with Libya. British industry would do a great deal more if there were a re-look at the political situation, and this is the time to do it.

For time reasons, I will leave it at that, but I make one plea: look at the sanctions unit and its work in depth in relation to Iraq and reconsider the Libyan situation.

12.57 pm

Mr. Mark Robinson (Somerton and Frome): It is always interesting to listen to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). I hope that you will not mind too much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we move away from

such exotic rivers as the Tigris and the Euphrates and come closer to home and the River Frome, and the narrow focus of the debate.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) on the wide-ranging way in which he launched our debate. He touched on many issues that are close to my heart, and I shall relate some of those issues right down to the local level.

I should not have been surprised by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins). It would be nice just occasionally to hear some rather more constructive opposition. Opposition Members always accentuate the negative. Conservative Members are often accused of harking back to 1979 and to what we inherited then. I should like to hark back to 1974-79, when something called constructive opposition existed. The Opposition would learn a lot, particularly in respect of industrial matters, if they started to balance constructive criticism with some of the good things that are happening to our industry, our economy and our companies close to the ground.

I have the good fortune to represent a constituency with an exceptionally broad-based economy, which includes manufacturing. It is a rural constituency; in the public mind, manufacturing is often associated with large companies and large employers, but that is only one part of the picture. Many small businesses in this country are producing, for the home market and for export.

Somerset has large interests in hi-tech industries, many of which are related, directly or indirectly, to the defence sector. It is worth pointing out that the sheer variety of commercial activity in my constituency and throughout the south-west has left that region especially vulnerable to the sort of far-reaching recession through which we have just passed. I believe, however, that this width of experience and expertise will provide the opportunity for the south-west to bounce back and take full advantage of the economic opportunities that lie before us.

I can understand and sympathise with constituents who have been hard hit by the recession when they approach me and claim that they have seen little or no evidence of the much-touted recovery. I have been careful to avoid issuing advanced green shoots statements, as my experience in banking tells me that it will take time for the optimistic statistics compiled and released by institutions in London or Bristol to come through as hard evidence in boardrooms, pay packets or the high streets of towns and villages.

Still, we have every right, after the gloom and doom of the past three years, to expect a return to confidence—it has started to happen. Now is the time to voice the basis of our optimism. As the Prime Minister has said, it is time for the pessimists to stand aside. The Opposition parties have been content to talk down hopes of recovery; that has become the ingrained attitude of the official Opposition. So it is up to Conservatives to speak up for Britain and ensure that the recovery gathers pace.

DTI figures and those released by the CBI prove that business optimism is returning. More than 70 per cent. of businesses in the south-west forecast that sales growth over the next three years will lead to increased productivity. Most importantly, perhaps, the latest CBI regional trends survey has shown that more manufacturing firms in the south-west than in any period since August 1990 report that capital expenditure on plant and machinery will rise over the next 12 months.

Investments in products and process innovation and in training and retraining is forecast to perform at a similar rate. In fact, expectations of capital authorisations are more buoyant in the south-west than in any other area except East Anglia. For a region in which manufacturing accounts for 21·1 per cent. of GDP and 19 per cent. of total employment, this planning is a critical factor in the south-west's recovery prospects.

Companies are taking advantage of low interest rates and inflation rates—but a word of caution must be sounded. I feel sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House have been approached by business men asking for a sustained period of stability in monetary policy. Industry relies as much as agriculture does on that ubiquitous phrase, "a level playing field". Only that will secure healthy levels of investment in the long term, which is why the success of the European single market, launched this year, is so crucial.

The same principle applies to companies that are taking advantage of our competitive position to trade their way out of recession by increasing exports of manufactured goods. The devaluation of the pound has helped to top up company export order books at a crucial time. As the CBI has pointed out, the situation has recently become more difficult on the continent, where some of our main trading partners are entering recession and where some have followed so-called perfidious Albion and devalued their own currencies to achieve a more realistic and competitive exchange rate. Nevertheless, manufacturing companies in my constituency are adopting a hungrier attitude to potential global exports, and that should compensate for the restrictions in our European markets.

I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade. The DTI has recently grown in stature and provides more practical help and advice than ever before for manufacturers who wish to expand their sales horizons. The Department also leads high-profile and extremely successful trade delegations abroad. I am sure that that is one of the ways forward and will help us to meet the CBI prediction of an increase in exports this year of 4·7 per cent., rising to 5·5 per cent. in 1994.

Achieving such dramatic results has undoubtedly been helped by Government measures since the autumn to provide an additional £2 billion of help for businesses looking to foreign markets. Paul Lewis, the export sales manager of Cuprinol, a manufacturer of wood stains and varnishes in my constituency, summed up the new attitude when he said:

"There seems to be a reawakening of the need to take up our traditional role as a trading nation."

That company's exports have increased by 30 per cent. over the same period last year. New markets are being exploited in the far and middle east and in Africa, the Caribbean and Europe, and the company is currently exporting more than at any time in its 60-year history.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will confirm that that success story is not unique. For the sake of the economy, manufacturing companies such as Cuprinol must be given every incentive and encouragement to continue their efforts.

As I have said, the defence industry plays a vital role in the manufacturing economy of the south-west where a significant proportion of the working population is employed by companies such as Westland helicopters in Yeovil and GEC-Marconi at Templecombe. The latter recently announced 90 redundancies and since 1992 the

[Mr. Mark Robinson]

work force has fallen by nearly 50 per cent. Those depressing figures have resulted from the curtailment of defence expenditure and from the normal process of rationalisation that many companies have had to undergo.

The full impact of those decisions has been felt across a wide range of sectors from mechanical, electrical and electronic engineering companies that are traditionally associated with defence, to other manufacturers such as textiles, clothing, construction and property.

The latest CBI survey for the south-west highlights the potential extent of the knock-on effect. Some 51 per cent. of companies receive some orders destined for the defence sector, even if they are not directly involved in the defence industries. However, companies involved directly or indirectly in the defence sector are reacting positively to changing circumstances. In the defence supply chain, 60 per cent. of companies have been actively developing new markets as their primary response to defence cuts.

In common with other long-established companies, Westland has radically changed its management system and is vigorously pursuing sales abroad for the EH101 helicopter which is manufactured in concert with Augusta. Fifty of those have been ordered by Canada and it is hoped that 16 will be ordered by Italy later this year. The utility order for 25 aircraft for the RAF, which has been outstanding since 1987, should be confirmed. I have made representations to that effect to my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement. This is an advanced multi-capability aircraft developed by a company which is making great advances in management philosophy and techniques in the face of a significant contraction of its traditional domestic markets.

Similarly, GEC-Marconi has won about £62 million worth of home orders this year and has earned £3 million from overseas where prospects for future orders look good, especially for mine-hunting requirements in Korea, Turkey, Spain and Australia. The company has responded to the challenges presented by the sharply constricted marketplace by securing a dominant position in submarine sonar technology. GEC-Marconi is currently seeking to secure the Royal Navy contract for the Trafalgar-class refit with its 2076 sonar system. Success in those projects is vital to the company's development. That is just one aspect of the changes in manufacturing industry, related to the defence sector in the south-west, which require special emphasis.

As the potential marketplace contracts, companies with a highly skilled work force are rightly looking to diversify their operations and to explore new markets where their expertise could prove useful. A recent survey shows that 13 per cent. of companies in the defence sector are actively seeking help in technology conversion. It might be useful to mention a company based in the village of Beckington in my constituency. Systems Engineering and Assessment Ltd. has been using its specialist knowledge and in-depth technical skills in signal and image processing systems, which previously related wholly to the defence industry, to pursue several new markets including space and environmental remote sensing systems and medical ultrasound image processing systems. At the same time, the company is actively looking for niche defence markets. Despite the difficult conditions of the past four years, that fascinating young and dynamic company has achieved an average growth of 30 per cent. per annum.

The message is clear—market leaders such as Westland and Marconi must be given every chance to prove the worth of their products at home and every encouragement to help them find new markets abroad.

Mr. Cousins: I am interested in the information the hon. Gentleman is giving about the defence industry in his constituency and region. He is no doubt aware that the Department of Trade and Industry aviation committee prepared a defence aerospace technology acqusition plan to secure the future of some of the industries, companies and plants that the hon. Gentleman mentioned. It submitted that plan to the DTI last December, but is still waiting for a reply. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman shares my regret about that and also the feeling that that casts doubt on the Government's serious commitment to the future of those industries.

Mr. Robinson: We would all wish to encourage the Government, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Defence to speed up their decision-making processes. That is vital to the ability of companies such as Westland and Marconi to plan their future business. There are lessons to be learnt.

The EH101 helicopter is a first-class product, developed in Britain and Italy, which is way ahead—by eight, nine or 10 years—of any other helicopter of that type and generation. We must have the capacity to go out and sell it. After all, the defence era is no longer one of moving massive armies around the world. As was evident from the private notice question this morning, we need to be able to provide a flexible response as situations evolve, often hour-by-hour or week-by-week.

Over the past three years, the south-west has suffered from an especially large increase in the failure of the previously buoyant small business sector. That has been the most noticeable effect of the recession on my constituency and the south-west generally. However, both the private and public sectors are showing that Somerset still has a great deal to offer to the potential advantage of both local firms and those wishing to relocate to Somerset from outside the county.

An excellent example is provided by Pellextra Ltd., a private development firm which took over the site of a disused tannery at Milborne Port in my constituency. Since 1990, Pellextra has used short, flexible leases in the conversion of the original buildings to attract a wide variety of small businesses, some of which are directly related to large manufacturing companies in the custom that they receive. The site now employs more than 120 people. Examples of new jobs being created—which may come as a surprise to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central—are apparent all the time. It is a pity that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central did not mention that when he spoke about job losses. Such an initiative is vital in a rural area with high unemployment. Some estate agents and surveyors tend to turn up their noses at the potential for development in areas that at first glance seem cut off from mainstream centres of urban business activity. The success of companies such as Pellextra demonstrates that that attitude is outdated and misguided.

Rural areas can provide a labour market, good communications and quality of life. Small businesses have every chance of thriving in rural areas, and that will prove vital in the economic recovery of many parts of my constituency, the south-west and the whole country. Small businesses throughout Somerset have also benefited considerably from the positive work of various enterprise organisations, whose activities I shall briefly explain and commend.

Somerset county council has sought to improve communications and to encourage the relocation of manufacturing firms to the area. It is serving an umbrella role for the Somerset training and enterprise council, which has helped to transform the county's enterprise agencies into five district centres from which local businesses can obtain a wide range of advice, and which provides vital services such as business reviews and improvements projects, training and general development assistance.

One district centre is based in Frome—a major town in my constituency which has suffered particularly severely over the past three years, with unemployment currently running at 13 per cent.—4 per cent. above the county average. The recently reconstituted Mendip district enterprise centre can play a pivotal role in the town's regeneration. The new chief executive recognises the need for the provision of a network of business information. He decided to establish a business club to act as a catalyst and focal point for local manufacturers and businesses, where they can exchange information. Although it applied to be part of the one-stop shop initiative, it was not successful at the first attempt. I hope that its work will make it eligible for the initiative when it expands, as I know it will. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take that into account.

The desire for a local business forum was recently proved by the response to a questionnaire sent by that organisation to 600 companies—77 of which replied in the first week. Mendip district council works closely with the enterprise centre, and I am glad that Frome should benefit from the council's plans to continue work on establishing a new industrial site between the existing Marston trading estate and Wessex fields on the edge of the town.

The council is attempting to have the land serviced by a new estate road, which it is hoped will be jointly funded by the private sector and local authorities. Partnership funding must be seen as the way forward, and awareness of that among councils and local enterprise organisations is warmly to be welcomed.

A subject of particular interest and concern to me for some time is over-regulation and red tape, which are harming manufacturing and businesses in the south-west and throughout the country. Earlier this year, I attended a radio interview armed with a pile of documentary evidence of unnecessary rules and regulations supplied by a major employer in my constituency, Butler and Tanner, which is a printing company. I have since been beseeched by numerous firms to consider the regulatory burden with which they are forced, often unnecessarily, to contend.

Recently, I visited Wincanton Ltd., a distribution company which has expanded by an average 11 per cent. over the past few years and now has an annual turnover of £200 million. The company has achieved that success, despite suffering a constant supply of new rules emanating from not just Brussels but frequently from Whitehall—covering everything from health and safety to food hygiene. As the sales director told me, the increased costs that the regulatory burdens entail filter directly to the customer. If companies such as Wincanton Ltd. that consistently do well are suffering from this phenomenon, how much more onerous and costly are such regulations proving to be to those companies that have found recent times much harder?

There is no mechanism in place at present whereby regulations can be subjected to procedural review. Some of the legislation is pre-war and has become bottled up in the system. I was delighted when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister expressed his determination to tackle the problem. The Department of Trade and Industry is examining more than 3,500 rules to see whether they are still necessary.

I should be delighted to support a Bill aimed at not only jettisoning unnecessary and old regulations but subjecting all new regulations to an automatic system whereby they are scrutinised regularly, either to be retained or abandoned. Such a Bill would gain the overwhelming support of local business men in the manufacturing sector and must incorporate, as I told my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier), the need for cost compliance to be taken into account in any proposed regulation. Any proposed regulation should be costed so that its impact on the costs of the businesses at which it is aimed can be directly assessed to get a balance between what is necessary and what are the legitimate concerns of those businesses in an age of increased competitiveness. After all, one way to bring unemployment down is to increase efficiency and competitiveness and go out and win markets against competition from others overseas.

I have covered a broad range of issues and concentrated on the evidence of those companies and organisations in my constituency that are showing the way forward. The economic problems that I have illustrated are not unique. As I said, the south-west region has suffered considerably over the past three years. Nevertheless, there is a heartening atmosphere of urgency about the attempt to find solutions, especially in Frome.

My roots lie in Somerset. Sadly, I have witnessed the suffering caused by the recession. However, I have every confidence that I am starting to witness the rebound. The evidence is there. In that context, I am especially looking forward, on Monday, to laying the foundation stone of a new company that has decided to locate in Frome. As my hon. Friend the Minister knows, that is not an exception. There are examples of new businesses, new companies, new developments and new expansions up and down the country. If we want to encourage the confidence of not only business men in the United Kingdom but people overseas who are looking for British products, we must start talking up ourselves and our businesses and get out of the cycle of pessimism into which we have so readily sunk recently. There is a spring in the air and future success will be the greatest tribute to the courage and tenacity of local business men.

1.23 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The hon. Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Robinson) spoke constructively and frankly, and contained in his remarks, inevitably, was a recognition of how business in the area that he represents has been hit hard in the depths of recession. There was also welcome support for the work in

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

which local authorities are engaged, including Liberal Democrat local authorities in the area, and for the spirit of councillors co-operating to do what is best for their area. That is the right spirit of this debate. The depth of the recession and the work of my political colleagues in the area must be contributing to what for him is a worryingly mounting pile of Liberal Democrat votes in the constituency of Somerton and Frome. The recent elections were, of course, a source of great encouragement to us.

The subject of today's debate is improved productivity in United Kingdom manufacturing. It undoubtedly improved during the 1980s. However, it still remains below that of most, if not all, of our main competitors. That shows just how big the problem is. It has been pointed out several times during the debate that the principal factor in improved productivity figures is the lower level of employment in manufacturing industry. There has been a reduction from 7·1 million people employed in manufacturing in 1979 to 4·5 million now. The number of jobs that manufacturing supports has massively decreased, so productivity must inevitably have risen.

The downside relates to the problems for the rest of the economy, which has to cope with the very large number of people without jobs. That is part of the problem which the Government now confront. It is part of the background to all the arguments about potential cuts in public services and to all the problems surrounding the public sector deficit. We have to generate activity in manufacturing and other areas to take up the slack in employment that was created during that extremely worrying period.

When we refer to increases in productivity, Ministers should bear in mind those industries where the productivity increases that were achieved were very hard won, but where disaster now strikes. I refer to three industries where disaster is bound up with Government policy: British Coal, Swan Hunter and the former British Rail Engineering Ltd., now the ABB works at York and Crewe. In all three instances, there have been significant increases in productivity and dramatic changes in labour flexibility. Productivity improvements can be demonstrated, but in every case disaster now faces those who, by their own efforts, achieved productivity increases.

The Minister knows, because of his previous departmental responsibilities, Ellington colliery in my constituency where there have been tremendous improvements in productivity. In other pits, too, there have been dramatic productivity improvements, but the coal review amounted to an appalling disaster for the coal industry and for several pits where significant productivity increases had been achieved.

Those problems have in part been caused by Government policy: for example, the featherbedding of nuclear power and the unfair market position in which coal has been placed. As for Swan Hunter, the absence of a clear and constructive policy to ensure that we have a reasonable diversity of shipbuilding capacity—indeed, any shipbuilding capacity at all—is at the root of the problem. Tremendous productivity improvements were achieved by Swan Hunter and labour flexibility improved enormously. In the past, rigid demarcation lines militated against productivity. Although those demarcation lines were swept away and although tremendous changes in working practices were made, the men who achieved those productivity increases now face disaster.

As for orders for the railway engineering workshops, even though productivity of the industry has improved, anxieties over railway privatisation have led to orders for rolling stock not being placed.

The rise in productivity due to changed labour practices owes something to the changes in the law. We support a number of those changes. We argued for some of them when they were still opposed by the Conservative party. I remember voting for postal ballots in trade union elections and for strike ballots when we were encountering the opposition of both the Conservative and Labour parties. I also recall arguing for the abolition of the closed shop when the Conservative Government were still sending their Solicitor-General to Strasbourg to argue that British Rail was entitled to have and should be allowed to keep its closed shop policy.

Much has changed in the intervening years. It is now generally recognised that a number of key changes in industrial relations law were necessary. Those changes have led to greater labour flexibility. The danger, however, is that we shall go overboard and will end up with basic trade union rights being threatened, an issue to which the Government must give some thought. The changes were necessary to achieve greater labour flexibility, but that flexibility can be affected by all sorts of things.

Another example of an area in which the Government need to be careful is relocation expenses, which will shortly be debated by the Committee considering the Finance Bill. The Minister must keep an eye on it, because, although the matter is dealt with by the Treasury, it is very much a matter for concern at the Department of Trade and Industry. One way in which companies achieve labour flexibility is by requiring or encouraging people to move to where they are needed. In order to do that, companies must contribute to relocation expenses, which are considerable and have been more difficult to cope with at a time when the housing market has been in a bad state. People who are trying to sell a house to move to another area as part of their employment will be in particular difficulty if the Government insist on limiting the ability of a company to meet relocation expenses. If the Government insist on making relocation expenses taxable over £8,000, many skilled workers, middle managers and technical and professional workers will not be able to make the sort of move that is necessary for company flexibility. The Department of Trade and Industry must get involved in discussions with the Treasury, because it is an important issue.

I would not ask for an open-ended arrangement to continue, but companies must be allowed to make reasonable provision for their workers who cannot afford to move. If workers cannot sell their houses for a long period, they must meet accommodation and other costs. The issue was not correctly dealt with in the Budget and the Government must modify it.

The Government can claim some credit for the part of the improvement in productivity which results from greater labour flexibility, but they must also look at areas where productivity can be increased by means that do not involve the loss of jobs. It is a mistake to view productivity simply in terms of what can be achieved by reducing the labour force.

The Government need to show that they can improve their policies on training, the support of research and development and transport infrastructure. Despite the significant improvements in company-based training, we still have an under-skilled work force and such gaps in skills are costing industry much money.

The Government must recognise that great improvements will not be made to our education until they try to carry the confidence and support of those who deliver education—teachers—and of those who are involved in supporting teachers—parents. It is not good enough for the Secretary of State for Education and Ministers acting in support of him to attack teachers' boycotting of tests when he has so manifestly failed to win the confidence of teachers for necessary changes.

That confidence has been fatally damaged by way in which changes have been made. In his opening remarks, the Minister referred specifically to technology in schools. Anyone who has been involved in the teaching of technology knows what a grotesque mess was made of the introduction of technology in the national curriculum. It was hopelessly mismanaged, which is recognised by the fact that substantial changes have been made to the original curriculum proposals for technology. The initial steps for the inclusion of technology in the curriculum involved such a drastic departure from practical skills that the machinery and equipment that had been installed in schools was going to be useless because so much of the effort was going to be switched to theoretical and design work of a pretty vague nature. Encouraging the interest of young people in basic practical and technical skills was rapidly disappearing from the curriculum as a direct consequence of what was done.

Thankfully, changes have been made, but the way in which the original changes were made was extremely unsettling, damaging and wasteful. The objective was right, but the steps taken to achieve it were extremely badly managed.

The Government will have to do much better in administering improvements in the education system and must make greater efforts to win the confidence of those most directly involved.

The hon. Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) referred to discretionary awards. In Northumberland, there are no longer any discretionary maintenance awards for a number of important and valuable training courses. Because of financial pressures and the way in which the grants were worked out, the local authority was unable to continue an important part of education provision. I agree that the Government should examine that matter.

I said that training was one way in which the Government could contribute to increased productivity. Another is clearly research and development, especially when directed towards innovation. All parts of industry ask that the Government should direct policy more clearly to the encouragement of research and development. I should be reluctant to have a tax or allowance system which, in a complicated way, tried to direct investment, but research and development is probably one area in which such provision could be made. Broadly speaking, I am not enthusiastic about specific allowances in the corporation tax system. I should prefer a lower rate of corporation tax, a stable tax regime and allowances indexed to inflation so that business knows where it stands, but research and development probably provides the strongest case of all for some form of fiscal incentive.

There is also more scope for the Government to consider the transfer of expenditure from defence research and development to civil research and development. Proportionately, most of the Government's research and development expenditure has been made by the Ministry of Defence. In view of the reductions in defence spending, we must move some of the effort into the civil sphere.

The Government can also improve productivity by means of the transport infrastructure. Industry knows full well how productivity is damaged by an inadequate transport infrastructure, including roads. However, I do not want to encourage the Government to direct investment into roads to such an extent that they lure on to the roads traffic that should be carried by rail.

Some of the greatest anxieties are caused by the railways. There is so much concern about the privatisation of the railways that it is hard to find anyone who believes that it will work. There is an investment gap in the railway system. A centrepiece of last year's autumn statement was the Jubilee line extension. We were told that it would be a significant boost to industry and to travel in the capital where business loses a great deal of money because of the difficulties of travel. That Jubilee line project is still not under way, so a significant part of the Government's claimed spending on transport infrastructure is not happening.

There are other gaps in the rail infrastructure, for example, on the west coast main line. Britain is in the ludicrous position of struggling to find a way of getting the trains from the channel tunnel to London in between the commuter trains while the French high-speed link is already in place. It would be a laughing matter if it were not so sad and frustrating for companies.

The Government's problem is that they believe that industry's competitiveness can be increased only by the control of labour and wage costs. Figures from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development suggest that labour costs in Britain are already low by international standards. In addition, productivity is low. If wage and salary costs are only about one fifth of industry's costs, control of wage costs alone will not help. Much has been done to control labour costs and the time has come to examine capital and transport costs, the quality of raw materials and the efficiency with which resources are managed. When a company has reached the limit in containing labour costs, it is time to start examining other problems and getting Government backing to deal with them. Long-term success will depend on tackling those problems.

We must also have regard to energy and resource inputs involved in industrial production. If we measure industrial success only by the reduction of labour costs and productivity per person employed, we shall fail to recognise the looming problem of our dependence on the use of finite resources and on pollution and damage to the environment, which we shall have to stop at some stage. Let us move quickly now to gain the competitive advantage of being ahead in the technology of better use of resources, the technology of energy efficiency and the technology of environmental improvement, where there are tremendous international opportunities.

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

One of the bodies that have contributed most valuably to our debate about industrial productivity is the Engineers Employers Federation, which has published a great deal of material on the subject. It says:

"The future success of the whole United Kingdom economy depends crucially on shifting resources into investment in manufacturing industry, technology and infrastructure."

It continues:

"The Government must make this shift of resources the prime objective."

It wants the Government to take a long-term view of the direction of industry and technology for 30 to 40 years and to to set their long-term policies accordingly.

Thirty to 40 years is a long way from the 36 hours to which the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), the former Chancellor, referred on Wednesday. Even before the right hon. Gentleman spoke, Ministers must have realised that short-termism is a constant criticism of the Government. It is also a criticism made of the financial institutions, as I shall outline later. The Government are always looking, at the very longest, to the next election—in the case of the present Government, to the day after tomorrow or the following morning's headlines. It is vital that the Department of Trade and Industry especially takes a long-term view and gears policies towards a long-term view.

The Engineering Employers Federation makes a similar point in relation to financial institutions. It says that financial institutions have a short-term outlook, that they seek unrealistically high investment returns and that there is constant pressure for dividend growth, which prevents United Kingdom industries from reinvesting as high a proportion of internally generated cash as is possible in foreign manufacturing industries.

That comment is also strongly made by small businesses and small business organisations. By and large, the bigger companies in Britain do not have a problem raising money or obtaining cash, but they face the problem that the financial institutions press for high dividend returns. Smaller business has a problem raising capital at all. It is locked too much into a system of raising capital on a short-term basis. It is bad for the health of the economy and small business that so much small business borrowing is on a short-term overdraft basis. It exposes small business to high short-term interest rates. It weakens the freedom of the Government to use short-term interest rates, as they have to do at crucial moments as an essential tool of monetary policy, and it inhibits the proper planning of a small business.

In both smaller and larger businesses it is important that we move towards a more stable long-term finance structure. The message for British financial institutions is that it would be much healthier if we saw them involved more in equity in business and if we saw them involved more in an understanding of the longer-term needs of a business. I should welcome the sight of more of the financial institutions on the boards of companies as non-executive directors. I should welcome the sense of commitment, which the German system seems to promote, of financial institutions to the long-term success of business. Some of the banks are beginning to recognise that the preponderance of short-term finance is not good for them or for business. It proved not to be so in the worst years of the recession, when the banks got their fingers badly burnt.

I hope that in both Government and financial institutions we shall see a longer-term approach to the success of companies whose productivity cannot be furthered in the long term if there is immense pressure to produce quick dividends increases or immense pressure to respond to short-term Government policy changes. We need a change of outlook throughout the United Kingdom and throughout the governmental and financial system.

Productivity increases, as we have seen in manufacturing industry over recent years, are clearly welcome, but they are on the narrow base of reducing labour and labour costs. If we are to have sustained productivity improvement, we must have improvements in many other fields, including research and development, training and transport, and we must have a better financial structure within which business operates.

1.44 pm

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): I am delighted to participate in the debate and to follow the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). I did not agree with much of his speech, but I know that, unlike the leader of his party, he is a man of principle.

Earlier this morning we witnessed one of the most unprincipled U-turns in parliamentary history. The right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) has spent the past nine months seeking out the cameras and calling for the Government to send our troops into Bosnia to engage in some kind of unrealistic military venture—our boys laying down their lives on the killing fields of Bosnia. Suddenly realising that that policy is unpopular, the right hon. Gentleman came to the House this morning bold as brass and called for our troops to be withdrawn. I am sure that the public will judge that outrageous and unprincipled about-face for themselves.

I am delighted to take part in this important debate about the impressive improvement in productivity in manufacturing industry in recent years. Manufacturing productivity has increased by more than 60 per cent. since 1979. Output per person rose by 5·1 per cent. in 1992. The first quarter of 1993 shows an increase in productivity of more than 7 per cent. Those are impressive increases by any standard, and far greater than those experienced by our competitors.

I want to focus on why those improvements in manufacturing productivity have taken place, on what is going right and on why the most recent figures are even better. Before doing that, however, let me emphasise why productivity is so vital. We are a trading nation. We buy and sell and we make and sell. That is what we do and what we have always done. Our future prosperity depends on the extent to which we can persuade customers, both domestic and overseas, to buy our goods. That is how we create wealth. That is why competitiveness is the key. Our companies must be able to compete on favourable terms with our competitors.

Being competitive means being ahead of the rest in three crucial areas—quality, availability and price. As many hon. Members will remember, British quality used to be a joke. We all remember Leyland cars in the 1960s and 1970s, put together by workers who had been transformed

into strike-happy clock-watchers by trade union oppression. Austin Allegros and Morris Marinas are still to be seen waiting for attention at the side of the motorway. That was Labour's Britain. Now Rover is outselling Mercedes in Germany. Is it not interesting to note that the Crown Prince of Japan chose to drive from his wedding not in a Honda but in a Rolls-Royce. British quality is once again becoming legendary throughout the world.

In addition to quality, availability is important. Customers do not want to wait for the goods. They want them now, and if they cannot have them now, they will buy them elsewhere.

If the quality is right and if a product is available, the price must be competitive. That is why productivity is crucial. Our unit costs must be equal to and, it is to be hoped, lower than those of our competitors. It is therefore extremely encouraging that manufacturing productivity is increasing so strongly in the United Kingdom. That will help us to compete, to export and to prosper.

There are two key reasons for the increase—the first is our economic climate. Among all the huffing and puffing from the Opposition, it is easy to lose sight of the fact that the economic framework in which business can prosper has probably never been better. We have low corporation tax, low interest rates, low inflation and a competitive pound. That is a framework not just for recovery but for long-term sustainable growth.

Earlier this week, I spoke to a leading industrialist in Plymouth—not, as some hon. Members may think, a contradiction in terms. I asked him, "What do you want the Government to do to help your business?" He replied, "You have already done it." "Steady as she goes," was the clear message. Manufacturing companies are now able to manufacture cheaply and export aggressively.

The competitive pound gives an opportunity to increase profits for investment or, more likely, to increase our market share abroad. Five million people work in our manufacturing industry which has never been in better shape. The hard work has been done. The blood, sweat and tears of many people and many businesses over the past few years, and the determination of the Government to get the economy right, have brought us to this new beginning: a unique opportunity to be competitive, to increase our market share, to create wealth and to begin a period of sustainable economic growth. Our productivity improvements are an important part of that.

The Labour party has shown itself again and again as having nothing to offer the nation. What happened to the campaign for recovery of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), which was relaunched on 9 November 1992? We have heard precious little about it since then. Perhaps that is because the hon. Gentleman admitted at the time:

"We accept that our proposals will increase public spending, but I'm not prepared to put a figure on it."

Have Labour Members learnt nothing over all these years?

I once saw a very good musical in London called "The Hunting of the Snark". It was about a group of hapless adventurers who set off to try to locate a mythical beast called the Snark. It reminds me very much of the Labour shadow Cabinet in search of a credible economic policy. Labour Members do not have one, they do not know where to look for one, and they would not recognise one if it bit them on the leg—not, of course, unless John Edmonds told them what it was. We have nothing to fear from Labour.

The Liberal Democrats stand for a united states of Europe. They want to legalise drugs and brothels. That is an agenda which the patriotic, good and decent people of this country will not support. We have nothing to fear from the Liberal Democrats. It is time to recognise and build on our economic strength and to look forwards and not backwards.

In a debate on industry, it would be remiss of me not to mention Devonport dockyard. It is the engine room of the local economy of the far south-west. Even at this late stage in the decision-making process, I call on the Government to acknowledge that Devonport Management Ltd. has won the argument and should win the contract to refit and maintain the Trident boats.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East will meet my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister next week in a last-ditch effort to put in a word for Rosyth. He should be ignored. How different his words were in 1984 when he said that

"the Trident programme . . . is unacceptably expensive, economically wasteful and militarily unsound."—[*Official Report*, 19 June 1984; Vol. 62, c. 188.]

How could any Government consider rewarding the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East if that was his view? If the Government had followed his misguided thinking, there would be no Trident submarines to maintain. I am sure that his views will now be ignored.

The second reason why manufacturing productivity is increasing so remarkably in this country is, of course, the industrial relations climate that we have put in place over the past 14 years. That is perhaps the greatest contributory factor in productivity increases. What a success story it has been. What tremendous advantages we have made in freeing manufacturing industry from the damaging, high-cost shackles of trade union domination which has blighted post-war Britain.

Those supply-side reforms have been the cornerstone on which productivity improvements have been built. I spent much of the 1980s advising employers around the country how to utilise the excellent Conservative legislation on industrial relations to free themselves of the dead hand of collective wage bargaining, stifling local agreements and restrictive working practices.

In many companies, I saw for myself the negative role of trade unionism, the intimidating tactics of shop stewards, the "us and them" mentality that was all-prevailing and trade union domination which brought inflexibility, a rigidity which was so damaging and a complete disregard of economic reality and of the company's financial position.

That was an expensive package that we simply could not afford. As a result, unit costs soared and productivity lagged. I have never been a great scholar of prehistory, but during the 1980s I saw dinosaurs led by dodos roaming at large in our midst, dragging our country down, plodding towards extinction. Much of that has been swept away in many companies throughout the land.

Now employers and employees talk to each other; they communicate and work together. Now people can be paid on merit and not because of a cumbersome collective bonus agreement. Now employees recognise the importance of productivity gains and beating their competitors. Now managers can devolve responsibility down the line to as low a level as possible. Now people can be genuinely flexible and multi-skilled and not locked into the past. Now people can take pride in their company, contribute

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their own ideas and work for the prosperity of their company. Now there can be an end to "us and them" and an understanding of team work.

All those things have been made possible by Conservative trade union reform. It is no wonder our productivity is increasing faster than that of our competitors. British companies now have the freedom to compete. Our supply-side reforms are beginning to reap enormous benefits, but we must remain vigilant against any return to trade union power.

I was going to talk about the revolution in the delivery of training and the improvement in management techniques, but I will leave that for another occasion. Productivity is improving, enabling our companies to compete in European and world markets. Of course we have further to go to make up for the wasted years of socialism and trade union domination, but in the past 14 years we have made a tremendous start. We have in place a framework for success to create wealth, to compete across the globe, and to achieve prosperity and peace in a Conservative Britain.

1.56 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): There is something distasteful about the way in which the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) and other Conservative Members constantly attack British trade unions and trade unionists and then lecture us about our links with the trade union movement of which we are rightly proud. At least those links are open, above-board and open to scrutiny by everyone. We are not like the Conservative party—funded by Greek and Hong Kong fascists and crooks both in this country and abroad, and refusing to publish our accounts. When the hon. Gentleman's party is as open about its links with some of the nastier elements of business in this country and abroad as we are with our links with the British trade union movement, democracy will be better served in this country.

It is not often that I find it incumbent on me to leap to the defence of the leader of the Liberal Democrats, but the hon. Member for Sutton attacked the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) by saying that he had changed his position. He should have listened to what the leader of the Liberal Democrats said. He said that, in earlier days, he had urged that there should be intervention into the old Yugoslavia, but the situation had changed dramatically; the time had passed, and now it was time to consider withdrawal because circumstances had changed.

The hon. Gentleman's attack on the leader of the Liberal Democrats was in keeping with his attack on British trade unions. It was wrong, it was inaccurate and it entirely misrepresented both of them. That is the last time that I shall come to the defence of the leader of the Liberal Democrats.

I also listened carefully to the Minister. He said that we should stop talking about the decline in manufacturing industry and talk rather more about the excellence of our manufacturing. Clearly that indicates that the Government have learnt nothing from the disasters of the past. The economic illiteracy within the Government appals me. We heard much from the former Chancellor about short-termism. It actually extends to the Government's economic policy, but I suppose that one should not be surprised by that, as the country is led by a Prime Minister who is a cross between Mr. Pastry and Eddie the Eagle.

I remember that when Lord Lawson in his former capacity used to say from the Dispatch Box—"Do not worry about manufacturing industry, we have service industry to rely on"—Conservative Members cheered him on. They must remember doing exactly that. A report from the House of Lords in 1985 made it clear that services are no substitute for manufacturing because they are heavily dependent on it and only 20 per cent. are tradeable overseas. That was the economic nostrum of the day. Conservative Members supported the idea that the service industries would rescue this country. They have not.

The key to Britain's economic future is manufacturing industry. It is a fact, as my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) said, that between the Napoleonic wars and 1983 we always ran a balance of payments surplus in manufacturing goods. Since 1983, we have been in deficit —and the projected deficit for this year is one of about £17 billion. That is the reason for our economic failure.

Conservative Members must shed the scales from their eyes and recognise the extent of the economic problems facing us. While the deficit has been accumulating, the Government have had the enormous and wondrous benefit of the £140 billion from North sea oil, and the privatisation money. It has all been squandered while manufacturing industry has been allowed to wither.

If we continue on present trends and as North sea oil runs out, this country will be reduced to the status of a banana republic.

"Output per head in manufacturing industry rose rapidly in the 1987-88 boom. It stopped rising in the early part of the recession and even became negative in the first half of 1991 —but rose by 4·7 per cent. in 1992, reaching an annual rate of increase of 5·8 per cent. in the last quarter".

That sounds good.

"This improvement is useful but seems mainly to have been achieved by drastic cuts in staff, reducing employment even faster than the fall in output. Since the recession began the workforce has cut by 735,000, or 14·5 per cent., whereas output has fallen by about 7·5 per cent. How much better it would be if output had increased while employment had been at least maintained."

That is what *The Economist* had to say about productivity. Of course, productivity has been increased, but only at the expense of a reduction in the work force. It should have come about by an increase in investment.

The Opposition want high employment and high productivity in this country. The Minister repeatedly challenged us to accept that higher productivity was better than higher employment. We do not accept that. The two are not incompatible, and the Minister should recognise that. The key is capital investment. I do not have time to go through all the statistics, but OECD figures show that we are so far behind our main competitors in terms of capital formation that our productivity is not sustainable if the economy expands.

The truth is that Britain's manufacturing base is now too small to cope with the demands being made on it by the domestic economy. The number of manufacturing jobs has fallen from 7·1 million in 1979 to 4·5 million today —a crucial statistic. It is not just a question of industries changing. Our manufacturing cannot service the needs of our own economy, and that will be shown if and when we manage to achieve any growth.

The statistics really should be studied carefully by Conservative Members before, like Lord Lawson, they

claim that some sort of economic miracle has been under way. What is really disturbing about this recession is the fact that, in previous recessions, imports declined; but this time imports have increased, while domestic output has actually fallen. We cannot continue like that.

If there is to be any movement in the economy—I hope that there will be—the people whom I represent will be looking around for jobs. Opposition Members do not want the recession to go on—we have nothing to gain from its perpetuation. Our constituents are suffering. We want some growth in the economy, but we will not go in for stargazing of the type that Conservative Members indulge in.

Between 1979 and 1989, every major sector of British manufacturing suffered from an increase in imports as a percentage of total home demand. That happened in every sector apart from food, drink and tobacco where the proportion remained the same. The implications of that should rapidly become clear. They are that if there is movement in the economy there will be a further upsurge in import penetration, and that in itself will be inflationary.

The balance of payments deficit continues to get worse and that puts pressure on the pound. To defend it, even with free-floating exchange rates, the Government will have to raise interest rates and the whole depressing cycle will continue. None of the Government's past policies or what they intend to do in future will break that cycle.

The President of the Board of Trade made a famous statement at a Tory party conference about intervening before breakfast, lunch, tea and dinner. He will put on a great deal of weight if he has four meals a day. He is not intervening, but manufacturing is being reduced to a skeleton while he is having his four meals a day. The Government have utterly failed British manufacturing and, by so doing, they have utterly failed the nation.

2.5 pm

Mr. Charles Hendry (High Peak): I welcome my hon. Friend the Minister to the Department of Trade and Industry in which we both worked some time ago. At that time, he had a fairly minor role and I had an exceedingly minor role as an official under the noble Lord Young. I am delighted to see how well all those who worked in that Department at that time have progressed since. The only exception is Francis Maude and it is a great shame that he is no longer in the House. However, he will be with us again before long and we look forward to that. Our other colleague there at that time was Alan Clark. I am not sure what he is doing now, but my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) is an able successor.

There was a sharp contrast between what the Minister said and the speech by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins). My father used to tell me that those who can, do; those who cannot, teach; and those who cannot teach go into politics. My hon. Friend the Minister played an important role in mining and the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central was a researcher and lecturer. That is a noble profession, and the fact that the hon. Gentleman followed it explains why Conservative Members will go on doing, while Opposition Members will continue to play politics.

The most breathtaking part of the speech by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central was the pretence that the firms that invested here during the 1980s would have done so under the last Labour Government and that their decision to come here did not owe anything to the Government's reform, especially our reforms of trade union legislation. Some 41 per cent. of Japanese investment and 30 per cent. of American investment in the European Community is in Britain. In a survey conducted by the German chamber of commerce, 82 per cent. of German companies here said that they would like to expand their investment in Britain. That shows the success of the Government's record.

During the miserable period of Labour government, car companies were not investing here; they were pulling out because they saw Britain as a country in endless decline with bad productivity and out-of-date working practices which were strike-bound and ineffective and all too often produced second-rate products that did not work. Worst of all, they saw a Government with a terminal desire to interfere in the operations of business and the marketplace.

Britain has moved a long way since then and my constituency is an example of this country's good fortune in having a mixed industrial and commercial base. It also demonstrates how our manufacturing base has survived the recession relatively intact. Some of our companies, such as Ferodo, Street Cranes, Otler Controls and British Aerospace, which is just outside my constituency at Woodford, are world leaders. Their clear message is that recovery is happening. At 7·1 per cent., unemployment in my constituency is high, but even that puts us in the lowest 100 constituencies. Because we have a mixed industrial base and have not suffered in the decline of the manufacturing giants, we have been able to sustain that base. We are all grateful for that.

The past three years have not been just a local success story; they have been a national success story. Even in the teeth of a recession, our share of world manufacturing trade has started to rise. That has built on our growth period during the 1980s when Britain was the fastest growing country in the European Community. It is absolutely clear that we must live, work and survive in an international arena. Germany, Japan, Italy, France, Belgium, Greece, Holland, Spain, Portugal and Austria are all competitors of Britain, but they all have a problem that we do not have—this year their gross domestic products will decline while ours will grow.

Last year, thanks to the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, a number of hon. Members visited the Mercedes factory near Stuttgart. We were told that it wanted to lay off up to 25,000 of the 40,000 people whom it employed. So great is the recession in German industry that such steps have to be taken. There could not be a more stark contrast between that and the growth in our car industry. Last month, United Kingdom car registrations were up by almost 12 per cent. on a year ago; car production in April was 14 per cent. up.

Last week, Toyota opened its plant only a few miles from my constituency. It already employs 1,300 people and, when it is working at full capacity, it will employ more than 3,000. It is the largest-ever investment in this country, without Government support, totalling some £700 million. Seventy per cent. of the plant's products will be for export. In time, that will make a £400 million difference to our trade balance.

The improvement in the car industry has been happening for some time. It declined relentlessly from 1971 to 1981. The House needs no reminding that five of

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those 10 years were the halcyon days of the Labour Government, when car production declined every year. Since 1981, almost without exception, but with a small drop at the end of the 1980s, car production has risen under the Conservative Government. By the end of the century, it will be at record levels.

The key issue, which was touched upon by my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton, is that of quality. People can now drive around with a Rover badge on their car —it is a sign of pride, not a warning against buying the car. Rover feels sufficiently confident that it is offering a money-back guarantee even to anyone who is dissatisfied with the colour of the upholstery. If it had offered that guarantee a few years ago, it would not have been just the M25 that looked like a parking lot; the M1 and the M6 would have been jammed with Montegos, Austin Princesses and Allegros being taken back to the factory by people wanting their money back. Such is the current reputation of Rover that it can now offer a money-back guarantee.

I am proud to get into my British-designed, British-build Land-Rover Discovery. Every time that I drive it I am aware that a British company is taking on the world and winning. There is a convention among politicians that when we are abroad we do not run down our country. It is sad that all too many Opposition Members, when they are at home, are relentlessly prepared to do so.

Rover showed us what happens when a nationalised industry is returned to the private sector. There is a similar story with other companies, such as British Aerospace at Woodford. Last year, the regional jets that it manufactures captured just over 50 per cent. of the world market in very difficult circumstances. Now, through a joint venture with Taiwan Aerospace, that success will be further built upon and British Aerospace's position will be strengthened. That joint venture would not be possible without the active support and intervention of Ministers at the Department of Trade and Industry—active intervention before any meal that Labour Members might care to mention.

The same is true of other privatised industries, such as British Steel, British Telecom and British Aerospace. British Airways has doubled the number of passengers that it had when it was privatised. Almost all those companies offer a better service to their customers at a lower price. Each and every one of those privatisations was relentlessly opposed, tooth and claw, by Labour. We need no lessons from Labour on how to bring those companies back into profitability and make them successful again.

A few weeks ago, the *Financial Times* wrote of the Labour party

> "Labour's corporatist interventionist instincts are alive and putting the boot into the free market. Those who thought that Labour had forsaken the profits are dirty, bash big business mentality of the post-war decades are in for a rude awakening."

Almost a year earlier to the day, the same *Financial Times* urged its readers to vote Labour, but now it realises that Labour does not change its spots. It is not an electable party and never will be.

Perhaps we should look more than anything at the example of British Coal, because of the topicality of the coal industry to the debate and to the House. Output per man in British pits more than doubled in the eight years since 1984. The tragedy of British Coal—I speak as one who has contested two mining seats and who has a tremendous affection for the industry and for the people who work in it—is that if productivity had increased as fast in the 1960s and 1970s, its work force would have been sustained and the difficulties that British Coal now faces would not exist.

Since 1979, the Government have supported British Coal to the tune of £18 billion of taxpayers' money, and the subsidy that the Government are continuing to give will ensure that British Coal continues to have a chance to compete. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central referred to Komatsu in his constituency. It seems all right for a failing British company to be taken over by a Japanese company—so why does Labour not welcome the decision by the Government and British Coal to encourage private sector companies to take over those British pits that do not have a future in the nationalised sector? The sooner that British Coal in its entirety can be returned to the private sector, the better it will be for all.

I come with the message from High Peak that manufacturing industry is not just improving but is in optimistic mood, and is looking forward with determination and in the belief that it can break through the end of the recession. Government policies are working. Industry itself will testify to that, and I urge the Government to continue on their present course.

2.17 pm

Mr. McLoughlin: With permission, I wish to congratulate those of my hon. Friends who participated in the debate.

Mr. Beith: And others?

Mr. McLoughlin: The right hon. Gentleman should be a little patient and not get excited, because I was about to say that other right hon. and hon. Members participated in a debate which—I say this with due deference to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell)—was more wide ranging than I expected, but I will reply to the points that were put to me.

We have slowly dragged out from Labour Members their agreement that there has been a dramatic improvement in manufacturing since 1979. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) said that we do nothing but attack trade unions as the cornerstone of all our ills. I would not go that far, but trade unions must take a big responsibility for the low growth that Britain suffered in the 1970s. In 1979, we lost 25 million working days through strike action, and that did British industry no good whatsoever.

If the hon. Member for Newham, North-West claims that there is nothing wrong with the trade union movement, he is deluding himself and the Labour party, which no longer talks of reversing the trade union legislation that we fought Labour tooth and claw to get through the House.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) made some good points about research and development with which I agreed. He quoted my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, but my right hon. Friend was merely pointing out what still needs to be done. I am not here today to say that everything is fine and nothing more needs to be done. Indeed, many of

my hon. Friends referred to areas in which more needs to be done, including education. Developments in education are wholly important.

The research and development scoreboard shows a welcome increase in spending by companies. In the difficult climate of the past 12 months, spending has risen by 6 per cent.—above the inflation rate—to £6·5 billion, so some changes and welcome increases have been made in research and development. Obviously, I should like to see more of that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) explained the changes that have taken place in the motor industry, especially at Vauxhall cars. He was right to say that Vauxhall has the same production levels and requirement levels as Toyota and Nissan and is competing with those companies. Those companies have had to reduce their labour force to compete. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central must accept that Nissan and Toyata are competing with a smaller number of workers than would have been required some years ago. If the British car industry had not made the same changes as Vauxhall and Rover, it would not be competitive today or producing cars. One way for the industry to become more productive was to reduce its work force. The simple answer is that unless companies sell their goods, there is no market and it is no good producing goods that no one wishes to buy.

Wide points were about the whole system of education, the way in which the GCSE was introduced and its importance in changing our education system. I agree with that. It must be admitted that, when the reform was introduced in 1986, there was tooth and nail opposition from various teaching unions. The new exam system got under way only at the insistence of the then Secretary of State, Lord Joseph, in the face of opposition, and was then widely welcomed by the teaching staff. Perhaps that also holds a lesson for us about what needs to be done in the future.

Several of my hon. Friends and the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) referred to the importance of the training and enterprise councils. I came to my new responsibilities from the Department of Employment, where I worked closely with those councils and saw the role that they had to take on. A number of TECs have taken forward some imaginative ideas and will have a substantial role in developing local enterprise and training. They were instrumental in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Robinson). The right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed tried quickly to link in what his county council was doing.

The hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) talked about the need for the assisted area map to be reviewed. That is being done and announcements will be made when final decisions are taken. I was sorry to hear the hon. Gentleman talk about social dumping. In some ways, he was saying that the inward investment that we have attracted is social dumping. If he thinks that, he should look at those companies because they have high-quality, good and proper jobs.

Mr. Cox *rose*——

Mr. McLoughlin: I am sorry, but I am short of time. I apologise if I have misinterpreted the hon. Gentleman, but that seemed to be the direction in which he was aiming his remarks.

My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier), in a developed speech, had some fairly radical ideas. That should not surprise us because he often has radical ideas and, sooner or later, some of them are pursued. I shall certainly reread his speech with interest.

I was slightly surprised by one of the points made by the hon. Member for Linlithgow. He referred to the reports that he has made and the people to whom he has spoken since his return. He said that people are amazed that we are still applying sanctions, that in November 1945 the Marshall plan had already been implemented, so why has there been no change? The hon. Gentleman seems to have overlooked the obvious fact that in November 1945 Hitler was no longer around in Germany.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow knows the view of the United Nations on Libya: sanctions are targeted at military equipment and goods relating to civil aviation and are in pursuit of a mandatory resolution that stems from the alleged complicity of the agents of the Libyan Government in the destruction of the PanAm aircraft over Lockerbie. The hon. Gentleman was right to condemn that horrendous crime. At that time, I was a Minister with responsibility for aviation and saw the consequences of the destruction of that aircraft.

As for the sanctions on Iraq, United Nations Security Council resolution 687 permits, under licence, the supply of foodstuffs, medical products and materials and commodities deemed as being essential for civilian use. Any United Kingdom exporter can apply to my Department's sanctions unit for an export licence and for a United Nations letter of clearance, confirming the United Nations sanctions committee's approval of the export of medical products to Iraq. I shall look at the hon. Gentleman's speech and give a considered response to the questions that he put to me. I will ensure that he receives a full reply, either from me or from my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade.

Mr. Dalyell: I asked for a considered response, but I should like to keep open the option that the Prime Minister has kindly given me of going to see him.

Mr. McLoughlin: If the hon. Gentleman feels it is appropriate, I am sure that he will wish to follow up that invitation.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome, I have a large rural constituency. I realise, therefore, that large constituencies are very diverse and that industry is vital to individual towns in such areas. If industry leaves those areas, it can have a devastating effect on employment. Nevertheless, I was pleased to hear my hon. Friend say that he has witnessed an increase in industrial activity in his constituency.

The right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed referred to relocation expenses. I am sure that he will deal with that question during the proceedings on the Finance Bill. I shall not comment, therefore, on matters that will be debated upstairs in due course.

My hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) made a strong case for Devonport naval dockyard. He knows better than most that no decision has yet been taken. An announcement will be made in due

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course. I can say no more than that now. Both he and many hon. Members with constituencies in that part of the country have made a strong case, both this morning and on other occasions, for the dockyard. I will ensure that what my hon. Friend said is drawn to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West said that the Government have adopted a short-term outlook. We have not. I have outlined today the changes in manufacturing productivity over the past 10 years. It has taken time to put into operation some of the measures that we wanted to take, because of the tooth and nail opposition to all the trade union and privatisation reforms that we believe are essential if the economy is to grow and develop. The business activity of many industries was restricted by their being in the public sector, so we have given those industries the freedom of the private sector to make commercial decisions and attract business from elsewhere in the world.

There have been tremendous achievements. Before they were privatised, British Telecom, British Gas and the water companies had to restrict their operations to the public sector. Since privatisation, they have had the freedom to become leaders in world markets, and they have succeeded. I do not, therefore, accept the accusation that we have adopted a short-term attitude.

My hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hendry), who shares a constituency boundary with me, made a number of important points.

Interestingly, when the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central was asked why, if so much is so awful, we had managed to be successful in attracting so much inward investment, there was a numbing silence. He could not bring himself to acknowledge that, in the past 10 years, the Government have put in place the right economic conditions, the right economic climate and the right industrial relations framework to attrack inward investment and to see a growth in jobs——

Mr. Cousins: A growth in jobs?

Mr. McLoughlin: A growth in the amount of jobs available that would not have been available if we had not been as successful in attracting inward investment.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Tax Offices (Closure)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

2.30 pm

Sir Roger Moate (Faversham): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary for being here personally on, no doubt, an inconvenient Friday afternoon to respond to this debate on the proposed closure of local tax offices.

If the debate had been held at a more convenient time in the parliamentary week, it would have been supported by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis), who is an adviser to the Inland Revenue Staff Federation. May I say how supportive he has been and that he would have been here were it not for prior commitments?

I have been impressed by the case put, and the manner in which it has been put, by members of the staff federation. They must be, and are, concerned about the disruption to the lives of their colleagues, but their arguments have related principally and genuinely to the question of providing a service to local taxpayers. Despite the likelihood of the closures going ahead, their concern, and mine, is that this should not happen unless we can retain a proper Inland Revenue presence, even a small but proper one, to provide good customer service to local taxpayers.

I have long been impressed by the commitment of the Inland Revenue to service to the taxpayer under the taxpayers charter. Even before the citizens charter entered our political life, I recall visiting Somerset house to be greeted by a large and splendid board proclaiming the taxpayers charter. Like the Ten Commandents, it was there, proud and dominant. There was and is a genuine commitment to the charter, and I understand that it is displayed in every tax office.

If it were not a Friday afternoon, we might have been graced by the presence of the Home Secretary, who once had an Adjournment debate on the closure of Folkestone tax office. Perhaps Mr. Matthew Parris would have been in the Press Gallery, because when he was a Member of Parliament he took the same course for a tax office in his Derbyshire constituency. Those were the last two Adjournment debates on the subject.

It is proposed that the Sittingbourne tax office should close this August. It is not the conventional wisdom that the Inland Revenue is held in love and esteem by its customers, but the proposal has created a great deal of local opposition and concern. I shall later give the Minister a petition that was gathered in the space of a few hours in Sittingbourne. It has been signed by more than 700 taxpayers who oppose the closure. I must warn him that the second signature on the petition is that of a Mr. Major, who may have friends in high places. Local companies, business interests and professional accountants have also objected to the proposal. I, too, oppose the closure most strongly.

I hope that, over the years, I have not troubled the local tax office too often, but when I have done so I have always received a most courteous and helpful response. The office has been of great assistance both to me and to my constituents. I shall be very sorry if that valuable link is lost.

Time after time, local offices have been withdrawn in many spheres of government, the public services or public utilities. It seems that there is a relentless drive towards centralisation which, we are told, will save money, use resources more efficiently or improve services to the customer. However, the opposite almost always happens: centralisation costs more, wastes resources and reduces the level of customer services. In any event, it certainly reduces the quality of face-to-face service.

We are often told that such changes are the inevitable consequence of the computer age and the revolution in information technology, but the reverse should be the case. Just as the computer terminal allows professional skills to be employed even at home, the computer link should encourage rather than undermine the provision of local services in local offices, offering face-to-face help to the consumer, backed up by direct and instant access to all necessary information.

I am not convinced that it will be cheaper or better to close local tax offices and centralise their services in a few, very large offices. Taxation officers and Revenue staff will need the same phones, desks, offices and computer terminals. It is not immediately clear where the substantial economies of scale are to be made, but it is clear that there will be greater travel costs for everyone—public and staff alike—and that local services to the customer will be lost.

My immediate concern relates to the proposed closure of the Sittingbourne office. It is a large office employing 80 or 90 staff who dealt with no fewer than 1,100 personal inquirers in the past 12 months. That was in addition to telephone inquiries and inquiries from visitors who wanted literature or those who attended for formal interviews. Let there be no doubt about the importance of the office in terms of local service or about the inconvenience that the closure will cause.

It is proposed to relocate the office in Maidstone. The journey to Maidstone by public transport is so long that it will deter most people. It is bad enough getting from Sheppey or other parts of my constituency to Sittingbourne, but the round trip of about 50 miles from Sheppey to Maidstone is unthinkable. One would have to allow a couple of hours for a return journey even from Sittingbourne to Maidstone or about three hours from Faversham or Sheppey to Maidstone. One must also take into account the inconvenience, the time lost and the cost of transport. The Minister and the Inland Revenue must understand that, in practice, people will not make such long journeys. Indeed, they cannot make such journeys, so customer services will be lost.

I shall concentrate on a number of issues that arise from the Sittingbourne closure but which apply equally to the question of Inland Revenue reorganisation. I do not think that most people—or, indeed, most hon. Members—are aware that we are on the threshold of an enormous reorganisation of the Inland Revenue network of local tax collection offices. I am told that there are 766 local offices, the majority of which will cease to exist in the next decade. There has been very little debate and very little justification for this immense exercise. I have suggested that the Treasury Select Committee should look into it, but I do not know whether it will. I hope that it will, because it is important that it should.

Let me put it on record that it is possible—probable, I suspect—that the Inland Revenue could make a powerful and first-class case for the process, but, equally, it is right that the process should be scrutinised, challenged and justified. I suspect that, after proper analysis, the case might prove not to be so strong, but it should at the very least be scrutinised. If it is not scrutinised properly by the House, we may be inundated with hundreds of similar Adjournment debates on Friday afternoons. If that is not a deterrent, I do not know what is.

I recently asked the Minister questions—through parliamentary questions and in correspondence—to which he gave frank and helpful answers. I asked whether there had been proper consultation with everyone involved. I wanted to know about the projected savings and how the Minister intended to continue to provide good customer services locally in order to meet the criteria of the citizens charter.

My hon. Friend gave some full and courteous answers. I do not intend to be abrasive—I hope that I never am—in saying that the answers simply serve to increase my scepticism about the whole exercise. I hope that my hon. Friend does not think that I am being too dismissive of the information he gave me. In effect, the savings are minuscule, if they exist at all. My hon. Friend has given me more information in a letter I received today which bears that out. In some areas there may be some savings, but in other areas there may not be. New central costs are incurred in terms of computer services and the like. It is clear that an immediate and substantial saving is not the objective of the exercise; even if it is, it will not occur.

I asked my hon. Friend about consultation, and he said that a number of representations had been received. However, I had the impression that, although the representations might have been courteously received, the programme was under way and virtually unstoppable, and that consultation was not really part of the exercise. I refer to public rather than to internal consultation. I leave it to others to decide whether that has been proper. I gather that there may be some complaints in that respect, but my objective today is not to deal with those.

The answers on the citizens charter implications were not satisfactory. My hon. Friend said:

"the Department is investigating alternative ways of meeting taxpayers' needs."—[*Official Report*, 10 May 1993; Vol. 224, c. *326*.]

It is not satisfactory to be told that alternative ways of providing help are being investigated when it is proposed that closure should take place this August.

I do not intend to dwell on the question of cost, but I point out that I was told that the total saving from the reorganisation in our area would be £1.25 million. That figure is rather dubious. Even the rental savings in Sittingbourne are likely to be only £79,000, which is such a small amount that it is likely to be absorbed by the margin of error. The £1.25 million saving arises from the substantial reorganisation of many offices.

It points to the scale of the exercise that, by March 1994, as my hon. Friend has told me, 15 reorganisations involving 71 existing offices will have taken place. Of those, 61 offices will cease to exist in their present form. It is that larger reorganisation which saves the relatively small amount of £1.25 million. I wonder whether that allows for the number of local offices that will be vacated and left empty, such as the excellent Revenue office in Sittingbourne? Taking all that into account, are we saving anything at all? So often in such reorganisations the costs go up. Reorganisation costs money.

I return to the key issue of meeting taxpayers' needs, on which I believe my hon. Friend can and should do

[Sir Roger Moate]

something. He should make it clear to the Revenue that providing proper tax advice offices in every significant town where offices exist today is a condition which must be met before reorganisation proceeds any further, either in my constituency or anywhere else in the land.

As a Treasury Minister, my hon. Friend is a perceptive and fair man. I never used to say that when he was a Whip, but I hope now that he will acknowledge that his answers have fudged the issue. They do not deal properly with the provision of a future service for taxpayers. I do not blame my hon. Friend the Minister or the Inland Revenue officials for doing their best with the reorganisation. They are working to their brief and doing their best, but such schemes develop a life and momentum of their own and sometimes need correcting. What should be provided to replace tax offices if and when they are closed? The answer I first received from my hon. Friend was:

"The Department is investigating alternative ways of meeting taxpayers' needs."

The closure is to take place in August, so it is a bit late to be investigating it. That is fundamental.

I then gathered that there might be a proper tax advice office locally. I take that to mean a small office—in Sittingbourne or anywhere else that is appropriate—manned by a small professionally qualified team of staff who can deal with most inquiries and help taxpayers, with direct access to computer records and enabling taxpayers to make appointments for interviews with inspectors on agreed dates. All such Revenue staff could be fully engaged all the time, doing normal tax work as well as providing a face-to-face customer service. But is that on offer? I think not.

I am told that such an office might be created at Maidstone or at other new large tax offices when they are established to replace the existing 766 offices. It is of little use to my constituents if the office is at Maidstone and in an inaccessible location.

My hon. Friend the Minister tells me in his letter today that there will be an improved telephone service. That is very good, but it is not what most people mean by a face-to-face personal service. Remember: there are 11,000 personal callers at our local tax office. A telephone service is not enough; it is not what people consider to be local service in accordance with the taxpayers charter.

We are then told about a mobile advisory service—a tax man in a tax van. Like the mobile library service, that may be good for villages, but most people will not consider it an adequate alternative to a regular, permanent, proper service in substantial towns and communities throughout the country. We are also told about tax clinics. I cannot really distinguish between the tax clinic and a mobile tax service. Neither sounds very substantial or permanent.

The solution to the problem is clear and would be easy to implement if my hon. Friend would take it on board. My suggestion is constructive rather than obstructive. It is simply that we should ensure that there are properly manned genuine tax advice or tax assistance offices in towns throughout the country.

The Government and the Inland Revenue should take a much harder look at the reorganisation scheme and should pause before closing any offices and, in particular, the Sittingbourne office. I have neither read nor heard anything to persuade me that the exercise will be anything other than more costly, more bureaucratic and more inconvenient for staff and public alike. In its present form and without improvement, it runs contrary to the whole spirit of the citizens charter and the taxpayers charter, to which I know and believe the Inland Revenue is truly dedicated.

2.47 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): I thank my hon. Friend for what he said about the commitment of everyone who works for the Revenue to the principle of quality of service. I am sure that he is right in what he said. The Inland Revenue is not always presented in a favourable light and when an opportunity to recognise the importance of its work arises, it should be taken. I thank my hon. Friend for doing that and wish to associate myself with his remarks on that subject.

My hon. Friend fairly sought to present his argument in the context both of the specific circumstances affecting Sittingbourne and of the general programme of office reorganisation on which the Revenue is embarked. Let me try to respond to his arguments in very much the same spirit. I shall start with the general and work towards the specific, using Sittingbourne to illustrate some of the general points. I should say in parenthesis to my hon. Friend that I share his natural suspicion of many of the arguments advanced in favour of improving efficiency and value for money by centralisation. That is a prejudice which I share with him absolutely.

I also share some of my hon. Friend's discomfort about the application of the principles of change within the Inland Revenue in the local office context. One of the things that my hon. Friend and I have in common—apart from the fact that I was once his Whip—is that the local tax office that serves Loughborough is also tied up in a programme of change similar to that which affects his constituents in Faversham. Therefore, I share his prejudice and his local constituency interest in the issue.

I want to refer to the programme of reform which my hon. Friend described and which, he rightly said, would merit more debate. One of the frustrating things about being a Minister is that one can commit a fair amount of time and effort to working out a policy programme and one can announce it, but if it does not capture the imagination, securing a debate on the issue is very much easier said than done. I would not run away from a debate on the programme and I agree with what my hon. Friend said about the merits of having a better understanding in the House and outside about what the Revenue is seeking to do.

I believe that the arguments in favour of the programme of change which was announced to the House—it was not kept secret—as a 10-year programme by the previous Chancellor of the Exchequer, are very powerful. The programme was announced just before the last election, so clearly we did not believe that it was something which needed to be shuffled under the carpet.

To understand those arguments, perhaps it is best to start by understanding the present situation and the disadvantages in the present structure of tax offices, which should be balanced against some of the advantages to which my hon. Friend referred.

It is quite right to say that, under the present system, we have an extensive office structure which is represented in most significant towns and cities all over the country. That much is true. However, it is also important to remember

that that office structure has weaknesses, one of which is that we still have in our tax system a distinction which no one, starting with a clean sheet of paper, would wish to defend as a principle that we would want to reinvent. That is the distinction between the inspector of taxes and the collector of taxes.

One of the most frustrating things about dealing with the tax system as it is presently structured is to be told by the inspector or collector—whoever it is one wishes to speak to—that he does not deal with the issue that one wants to talk to him about and that it is the responsibility of his colleague—the collector or inspector—on the other side of the fence. The distinction between inspector and collector is not something that I regard as a strength of our system.

Another disadvantage in our system is that although there is a local tax office in each significant town and city, it does not mean that a resident of that town will have his tax affairs handled in that office. The vast majority of residents have their tax affairs dealt with through the schedule E system of PAYE. The PAYE base is not in the tax office where the resident lives, it is in the tax office of the payment point of the employing company. With regard to large national companies, it can take some time to find the right tax office to inquire about one's affairs. One does not deal with one's local tax office as the tax office is determined by the employer's payment point.

Another disadvantage of our present system is that even if one ultimately finds the PAYE office that deals with one's PAYE affairs, if one has more complex tax affairs it is likely that that office will not deal with other aspects of one's circumstances. Individuals might find themselves dealing with more than one tax office in relation to different aspects of their private affairs.

All that is the result of our traditional system. Those are weaknesses of that system. That is why the Revenue has embarked on the process of change to try to address some of those weaknesses and at the same time—I do not apologise for this—to deliver significant cost savings.

What does the programme of change announced by the Chancellor in March 1992 do? First, it addresses directly the distinction between inspector and collector as it commits the Revenue to merge those two operations. Secondly, it seeks to establish the new office structure—the three-tier office structure—to which my hon. Friend referred and with which he is clearly familiar.

That structure will bring significant benefits. It will bring, first and foremost from the taxpayer's point of view, a new system which will ensure that there is, for each taxpayer, a single point of contact with the Inland Revenue for the first time. Whether one is dealing with a collection function or an inspection function, and whichever part of one's affairs—if they are complex—one is dealing with, there will be a single point of contact.

Dealing directly with my hon. Friend's point about the taxpayer assistance system, because it will be a more specific function within the Revenue, there will be a more direct commitment and a greater capacity to deliver a high-quality taxpayer assistance service than exists at the moment. I know that my hon. Friend doubts that, because he read my letter on the subject and he says that we have not yet committed ourselves in concrete to what precisely the structure of that service will look like in Sittingbourne.

My hon. Friend is on to a fair point, except that it seems that what is important in the context of taxpayer assistance is not the bricks and mortar, the nature of the office and telephone and the qualifications of the person who will sit there, but that the taxpayer assistance service directly answers the specific concerns of the citizen, the taxpayer, whom it is there to serve.

I turn my hon. Friend's arguments back on him and stress to him the benefit of having a commitment to taxpayer assistance which is flexible and which we are determined should respond to the specific concerns that are expressed in my hon. Friend's constituency, for example. I am not sure whether my hon. Friend would think that the interests of taxpayers in Faversham are best served by having bricks and mortar in Sittingbourne or having a specific support provided more closely to them in Faversham. Those are questions which the Revenue management is quite correct to address to seek to deliver a better service.

I understand my hon. Friend's natural concern to see something that is firm and a commitment that can be readily understood. The commitment is not to a specific nature of service. The commitment, as the citizens charter enjoins it to be, is to deliver a quality of service in terms of taxpayer assistance.

The third benefit, which we should not sneeze at, is that the programme of change to which the Revenue is committed will deliver running-cost savings over a 10-year period which, at the end of that period, will amount to roughly £70 million a year in today's values. I accept my hon. Friend's point that we must tie that down and that matter has been the subject of more than one intense conversation between myself as the Minister responsible and the chairman of the Board of the Inland Revenue. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that if we embark on a 10-year programme at the end of which we are promised Revenue savings of £70 million a year, it is part of the functions of Ministers on behalf of the taxpayer to insist that that saving is secured. And, furthermore, it is a part of Ministers' responsibilities to set out milestones along the way so that we do not suddenly get to a point in 10 years when we say that we were promised £70 million in savings and suddenly they are found not to be there.

There will be savings, there will be a single point of contact, and there will be a greater commitment to taxpayer assistance, because that is part of the purpose of the changes that we are undertaking.

On the specifics of the programme in Sittingbourne, as my hon. Friend will know, what is being done in Sittingbourne is not in a sense what was done in the tax office case of Matthew Parris or even, I suspect, of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary in Folkestone, to quote the two examples to which my hon. Friend referred. It is quite consciously part of the wider process of change which I have been describing. It brings together the functions of the Sittingbourne tax office, the existing two offices in Maidstone, and part of the collection activities in Chatham and Canterbury. It delivers significant short-term savings—never mind the contribution to the wider programme and the £70 million over 10 years that I have been talking about. The new Maidstone office will deliver the service to the area for which it is responsible for a figure which will cost the taxpayer in Revenue savings about £340,000 a year less than the existing tax office structure does.

Once again, I agree with my hon. Friend that we must make certain that those savings are real and secured, but £340,000 a year out of a local tax office does not seem to me to be an insignificant quantum of savings.

[Mr. Stephen Dorrell]

The justification of the change is two-fold in terms of the Sittingbourne office. The first is that it delivers cost savings in its own right as a scheme and the second is that it is part of a wider reorganisation of the Revenue which is designed to improve the service to taxpayers and provide a better value-for-money service for taxpayers as part of the Inland Revenue's contribution to the citizens charter programme and improving the public service.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 14 June 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Cathedrals

1. **Mr. Brandreth:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what grants his Department is making to support the preservation of the major cathedrals.

The Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Peter Brooke): The cathedral repair grant scheme assists with the repair both of cathedrals and of comparable buildings of other denominations. English Heritage has provided £11·5 million over the three financial years to 1993-94, and I was pleased to announce that £4 million will be available for this work in each of the years 1994-95 and 1995-96.

Mr. Brandreth: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that reply. Is he aware that the maintenance of our great cathedrals can no longer be left to the cathedrals themselves and the Church Commissioners? Chester cathedral is enormously grateful for the support of English Heritage, the European Community and local businesses such as North West Securities. Does my right hon. Friend plan to do more to explore, encourage and sustain partnerships of that kind for the further support of our great and ancient cathedrals?

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend is right to identify the need for help for the fabric of our cathedrals and about the notable effectiveness of a pluralist response. I am grateful to him for his comments about English Heritage's contribution, and I look forward to the kind of partnership that he described in a series of cases.

Mr. Enright: While welcoming the support for cathedrals, may I ask whether it applies only to ecclesia Anglicana, or do all other churches and similar buildings receive a grant?

Mr. Brooke: I shall reiterate my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth). I said that the cathedral repair grant scheme assists with the repair both of cathedrals and of comparable buildings of other denominations.

Deregulation

2. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what initiatives his Department has taken to promote deregulation.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Iain Sproat): My Department is currently carrying out a detailed review of those regulations which impact upon businesses that regularly and significantly supply goods and services in areas for which my Department is responsible. Most of these regulations are not the direct responsibility of my Department but, where justified, my Department will be making strong representations to the relevant Department about unnecessary and burdensome regulations and over-zealous or unacceptably inconsistent standards of enforcement.

Lady Olga Maitland: I warmly welcome my hon. Friend on his return to the Dispatch Box and congratulate him on his commitment, about which I know, to dealing with absurd red tape. Will he tackle as a priority the extraordinary absurdities in fire regulations? Is he aware that they date back to the days when theatres were lighted by gas flames, when cinemas distributed films on highly combustible nitrate, and when there were no smoke alarms or fire ventilators? Such regulations place impossible burdens on places of entertainment. Therefore, will my hon. Friend tackle that problem and modernise all the regulations, bringing them up to date?

Mr. Sproat: I am glad that my hon. Friend asked that question, because she made two important points. First, with regulations on such matters as fire safety, it is extremely important to ensure that we keep them and that we have the right ones. Equally, it is clear that it is unlikely that fire safety regulations introduced for theatres lighted by gas will be as modern as they should be. Following her perspicacious question, I shall see whether that should be changed.

Mrs. Clwyd: I welcome the Minister to the Dispatch Box, and have a question about maintaining a policy of deregulation of the press. Will he enlighten the House on the extent of the disagreement between his Department and the Prime Minister on that issue? Is it true that the policy unit at No. 10 was planning a meeting on that matter with Fleet street editors without consulting the Secretary of State? Is it not the case that the Secretary of State favours self-regulation, while the Prime Minister, facing a hostile press, wants to impose tough controls? Is there some disagreement?

Mr. Sproat: No, there is no disagreement. We shall make our views known in due course, as the hon. Lady well knows from the debate last Thursday.

Mr. Waterson: May I join those welcoming my hon. Friend back to the Dispatch Box after he was rudely interrupted? Does he agree that the last thing that restaurateurs and hoteliers in my constituency of Eastbourne need is more regulation, and that it is quite absurd that, for example, cheeses have to be kept in a separate room in a fridge, when one has only to cross the channel to see them kept as they should be, in the restaurant, without benefit of refrigeration?

Mr. Sproat: My hon. Friend makes an extremely good point. There are many such examples. We may come to deal with them in more detail in a later question. I shall certainly look at the example that he gave and deal with it.

Regional Orchestras

3. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is his policy on regional orchestras; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sproat: The Arts Council and the BBC are responsible for formulating policy relating to regional orchestras. They are collaborating on a joint review of orchestral provision, and a report will be considered by their governing councils later this year. A period of public consultation is planned subsequently.

Mr. Jones: Bearing in mind the pressure on the Arts Council budget, what is the future for great northern orchestras, such as the Liverpool Philharmonic and Manchester Hallé? I declare my interest as a life member of the Liverpool Philharmonic and as a friend and subscriber.

Does the Minister accept that the Liverpool Philharmonic has considerable financial difficulities? Will he explain how he may help that great orchestra, as it has a great record of touring and artistic success, and has a charismatic maestro in the person of Libor Pesak? I think that he will agree that Liverpool is now making a new economic future. it is proud of its orchestra and to make the best of its prospects, Liverpool needs the Philharmonic to have the best possible financial backing. What can he do to help that great orchestra?

Mr. Sproat: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point. I share his view of the high qualities of the Liverpool Philharmonic and the Hallé. I can tell him—these are not glib words—that the Arts Council increased the grant to both orchestras by more than 6 per cent. last year, which was more than other main regional orchestras got. That was more than £1 million to each. We are both seized of the importance of the artistic quality to which he referred and, through the Arts Council, are doing something specific and considerable about it.

Mr. Dickens: Will my hon. Friend concede that the Hallé is one of the finest orchestras in the world? It gives great pleasure in Manchester and the north-west—and, indeed, internationally: it is admired throughout the world. Can we assume from the assurances that my hon. Friend has given that he will ensure that our northern orchestras are properly funded?

Mr. Sproat: I can certainly give my hon. Friend the assurance that he seeks. It is a great tribute to the Hallé orchestra that its standards have never been higher than they are today, even in the days of Sir John Barbirolli. We are determined to maintain those high standards, both for the people of Manchester and around the world, where the orchestra tours.

Film Industry

4. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what discussions he has held with the British and international film industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: In February this year, I met the president of the Motion Picture Export Association of America, at his request, to discuss the state of the United Kingdom industry and United States interests here. I am now engaged in a round of 10 meetings with the different sectors of the United Kingdom industry to discuss the state of the industry and possible measures to help it. I will announce my conclusions in due course.

Mr. Jessel: Many British films are brilliant—of outstanding quality—with British talent winning top awards for acting, photography, direction and production. Will my right hon. Friend see what can be done to retain as much British talent as possible in British-made films, and to bring together people who might finance more first-class films?

Mr. Brooke: I wholly agree with my hon. Friend's analysis of the strength of the industry. The aim of the important talks in which we are engaged is to discover whether, by some means or other, we can restore critical mass to the industry, and build on that.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is the Secretary of State aware that there is no great secret about the matter? The industry is capable of not only attracting large sums to this country, but providing a good deal of employment. Its present parlous state is directly due to Her Majesty's Government's refusal to give it any assistance, either fiscally or in any other way. Will the right hon. Gentleman simply accept that it is his responsibility to do something quickly?

Mr. Brooke: I do not often address one of my constituents in so direct a manner, but that was not the most knowledgeable question that the hon. Lady has ever asked. [HON. MEMBERS: "She will not vote for you now."] The hon. Lady has frequently told me that she does not vote for me.

The Government provide £24 million in support of the industry, by a variety of means. In the talks in which we are engaged, we are analysing possible other ways in which help could be provided.

Mr. Harry Greenway: May another of my right hon. Friend's constituents—who does vote for him—remind him of the excellent work done by the Ealing film studios—

Mr. Cormack: Carry on Harry!

Mr. Greenway: —mostly in producing comedies? Is he aware that there are many more excellent films where those great films came from, and that they can be made if money goes into the industry? Will he do even more than he is already doing?

Mr. Brooke: It is because of the industry's underlying strength—not least in terms of technical resources, as well as creative and acting resources—that we are conducting our conversations. It may be worth recording that the bringing together of various aspects of film in my Department represents the first occasion on which the cultural and commercial considerations have been united in a single place.

Mr. Corbett: We welcome the talks between the Secretary of State and those involved in the film industry. I hope that he will also consult those who are active in film making in the regions; they have a role to play as well.

Films involving British producers, directors and writers have won about a third of the Hollywood Oscars over the past 20 years. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware, however, that last year only one major cinema film was made here? Is he aware that American films netted 10 times the £24·4 million earned by British films in the United Kingdom last

year? Will he not introduce tax breaks and other incentives to help British film makers build on their success and compete more equally, here and in the international market, at a time of rising cinema attendances?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his support for the talks in which we are engaged. I can give the House a further piece of news about the industry's achievements: of the 36 scripts chosen last week under the EC media programme, seven were British film scripts.

As for the substance of the hon. Gentleman's question, although I may discuss the issue with the Chancellor, tax is essentially a matter for him.

Tourism

5. **Mr. Coe:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps he is taking to introduce more deregulation measures to help the tourist industry.

Mr. Sproat: I am deeply concerned about the reports of unnecessary and seemingly counter-productive regulatory burdens under which large sections of the tourism industry believe that they currently operate. I am therefore now inviting those involved in the tourism industry to write to me and/or to come and speak to me directly in the next month about problems arising from over-regulation. I shall be writing later today to all the regional tourist boards and other appropriate tourist bodies, inviting their views. I have already asked my officials to undertake an urgent and detailed inquiry into burdensome regulations specifically in tourism. My Department will then produce a report on this important subject and make the results known before the House rises.

Mr. Coe: I welcome my hon. Friend to the Dispatch Box and wish him particular luck with the part of his portfolio relating to sport—he will certainly need it.

I thank my hon. Friend for his specific and helpful reply. He should be aware that the tourism industry will be pleased and encouraged by his words. May I immediately take him up on his offer to consult directly with hoteliers and other branches of the industry, and ask him whether he will see a delegation from my constituency which will put to him at first hand the deeply damaging regulations which beset many hoteliers and most branches of the industry?

Mr. Sproat: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind remarks. I should be extremely pleased to see a delegation from his constituency, because I know only too well that the south-west of England is one of the areas in which tourism is suffering particularly dramatically.

Mr. Raynsford: Does not the Minister recognise that, without proper and effective regulation on many aspects of our national heritage, we should not have much of a tourist industry, because historic buildings would have been demolished, our beauty spots destroyed by insensitive road development and works of art exported because of a lack of controls? Will he put aside the absurd ideological fetish of deregulation and recognise that there is a need to preserve what is best in Britain's heritage?

Mr. Sproat: I am happy to tell the hon. Gentleman that of course there are many spheres in which regulation is extremely important. I have already mentioned fire regulation, and I agree that regulation to preserve and conserve that which is best in our heritage is another. However, it does not mean that, while preserving good regulations, we should not consider the barmy ones, which is precisely what my Department is going to do—distinguish sharply and clearly between the two different types.

Mr. Gorst: Can my hon. Friend estimate what regulation is costing at the moment? If he is not able, at this stage, to give an estimate, will he ensure that, when the survey has been carried out, we are given figures as well as general facts?

Mr. Sproat: I will gladly do my very best to produce figures on the burdens that the tourist industry is suffering from regulation. It will not be easy, but we shall ask the industry for its best estimates, and we will certainly publish them.

Mr. Pendry: In welcoming the Minister to his new post and recognising his zealous approach to most regulations, may I remind him that the tourist retail task force initiative is well under way, and that many new measures of good deregulation could flow from its deliberations? Will he assure us that his initiative will not in any way hinder or duplicate its efforts? Will he accept it from me that what the industry wants from him is a clear commitment to restore the damaging cuts made by his predecessor to the English tourist board? As the chief executive of the board said, unless the Government make such an effort, there will be no meaningful services beyond 1994.

Mr. Sproat: The hon. Gentleman, perfectly fairly, asks two quite separate questions. I give him the guarantee that he seeks on regulations: we will not hinder any work that anybody else is doing. We shall draw on work that other bodies are doing on deregulation and use it. On cuts in the ETB, it is quite impossible at a time of severe economic restraint for anybody to be wholly immune from economic restraint. The ETB must bear its burden. Tourism increased by 8 per cent. in the first quarter of this year. We have low interest rates and low inflation. Tourism is doing very well, and it is my intention to make it do even better.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Does my hon. Friend agree that we need a cost benefit analysis of rules and regulations as they affect tourism and other departments and that, where costs are disproportionate to the benefit that they would bring, the rules and regulations should be scrapped?

Mr. Sproat: My hon. Friend makes an extremely good point. I assure him that we shall seek to make not only a compliance cost assessment of every regulation but a risk assessment to see whether it is worth the risk that it is trying to obviate. I give my hon. Friend the assurances that he seeks.

Broadcasting Act 1990

6. **Mr. Mandelson:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment he has made of the working of the Broadcasting Act 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The aim was to increase diversity and choice in radio and television service, and this is being achieved.

Mr. Mandelson: In view of the private conclave that the Secretary of State is holding with ITV bigwigs later this afternoon, will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House whether the Government still believe in the principles of competition and regional diversity, as contained in the Broadcasting Act 1990, or now support greater concentration of ownership and takeovers among ITV companies? If it is the latter, what steps will he take to ensure that we do not suffer from a wave of foreign takeovers and invasions of British television companies?

Mr. Brooke: Since I took office, a number of television companies have asked to see me to discuss aspects of the 1990 Act. Some put one position, some put another, but these were a series of bilateral conversations in which the stations and companies argued their case. I thought that there was virtue in having a meeting, which I am holding this afternoon, at which it would be possible for all to express their opinions with others present so that there will be discussion among them. My job is to listen to the debate.

Mr. Alison: Will my right hon. Friend encourage the Independent Television Commission to ensure in its review of the codes of practice for religious broadcasting that the Christian gospel, of which he is a doughty champion and which is an essential part of our cultural heritage, can be presented directly and unambiguously on all main independent television channels?

Mr. Brooke: I am conscious of the responsibility and intention of the ITC to review the code, and I shall be in touch with it about that review.

Mr. Maclennan: Has the Secretary of State yet had a chance to reach a conclusion on the representations that he has received from a number of companies about the allocation of transmission costs and the proposal to depart from the IBA formula that related costs to the earning power of regions? The proposals that have been made by the majority of companies in the Independent Television Companies Association would leave at least five of the small companies bearing a burden that would put at risk the continuance of television in those areas.

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that propositions have been put to me by the association. My Department has been in touch with individual broadcasters on matters deriving from those propositions. I am addressing that matter at the moment.

Mr. John Greenway: As an adviser to Yorkshire Television, may I thank my right hon. Friend for the very courteous and constructive way in which he is listening to the real concerns about the future of commercial television in this country? He is right that there is a difference of view among regional franchise holders about the sort of structure needed for the ownership of television franchises in the United Kingdom. But the franchise holders are united in their request for an extension of the moratorium on foreign takeovers, as referred to by the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson). Will my right hon. Friend please see to it that that is done?

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend identifies part of the problem that I was reflecting when I answered the hon. Member for Hartlepool. We do not enjoy unanimity in these matters, and that is one of the reasons why I wish to hear the companies debate the matter in my presence.

Mrs. Clwyd: Will the Secretary of State reflect when he meets the ITV companies this afternoon that there is unanimity about the chaos caused to the companies by the Broadcasting Act 1990? Will he also reflect on the widespread belief that concentration of ownership will mean less regional diversity, less—not more—competition within ITV and less employment in the regions? Will he remember that the rationale for the Act was not to make the biggest profits for operators, but to ensure the survival of regional commercial television?

Mr. Brooke: I understand that, in circumstances such as Question Time, it can be impossible to expand on a particular point. However, the hon. Lady did not amplify her remark about chaos. With regard to the representations that she made about a particular point of view, they have been made to me before and, no doubt, will be made to me again later this afternoon by those directly involved.

Theatre and Dance Companies

7. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list all those *(a)* theatre, *(b)* ballet, and *(c)* dance companies which have had their arts grant funding withdrawn in each of the last three years.

Mr. Sproat: Aggregate funding in these three areas by the Arts Council is currently more than £60 million. In the past three years, no theatre or ballet company has had its grant withdrawn by the Arts Council. Funding was withdrawn from one dance company, Extemporary Dance, in December 1991.

Mr. Hughes: Do the Minister and the Secretary of State realise that, unless some extra funding can be secured, the London City Ballet will have gone into liquidation and come to an end before the next Question Time on this issue? The company is extremely popular and successful and a high revenue earner, both at home and abroad. Would Ministers be willing to meet a deputation from all parts of the House in the next few days and before the deadline, to ensure we do not have the economic madness of a company going out of production that would cost the taxpayer more if it were not performing than if it was?

Mr. Sproat: I am well aware of the 3 July deadline to which the hon. Gentleman refers. I also think that his description of the work of the London City Ballet is accurate. I should be pleased to meet a delegation from all parts of the House to see what might be done. However, I would not wish to raise expectations too high, given that the Arts Council operates at arm's length and has decided that it does not want to continue to support the company.

Mr. Dicks: May I welcome my hon. Friend to his Front-Bench position? May I tell him that there are many thousands of people in the country who are sick and tired of any of that nonsense being funded from the public purse? Can he take the opportunity, at a time of financial stringency, to recommend to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury that his Department be done away with altogether?

Mr. Sproat: My hon. Friend's views on the matter are well known, and I take them seriously. *[Interruption.]* Well, I would say that many people—perhaps more outside the House than inside—who look at the £225 million that the Arts Council receives each year say that

that is equivalent to three brand-new hospitals. We have to look after the spiritual health as well as the physical state of the nation, but both should have their proper place in our accounting.

Mr. Sheldon: Has the Minister seen the new Globe theatre rising on the south bank? It is now visible even from the other side of the river. As the theatre has not received public funds and is nearing completion, will the Minister ensure that some funds are now made available to that project in some way that is open to him?

Mr. Sproat: I am not aware of the details of the case to which the right hon. Gentleman refers. However, I will certainly look at the matter and give it proper consideration.

Industrial Heritage Year

8. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received about Industrial Heritage Year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I have received no representations, but I understand that there has been an encouraging response to the English tourist board's promotional campaign: "Experience the Making of Britain".

Mr. Thurnham: In view of the importance of Industrial Heritage Year in the north-west, may I extend an invitation to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to visit the historic Hall i' th' Wood museum in my constituency, which is the birthplace of the industrial revolution, the home of Samuel Crompton and which is now very much in need of repair? It would be excellent if Industrial Heritage Year could be the occasion for that historic building to be restored properly.

Mr. Brooke: As my hon. Friend knows, I had the great pleasure of visiting his constituency in March so that we could both watch Bolton Wanderers win and we are both delighted by the success of Bolton Wanderers this season. I very much hope that there will be a further opportunity to visit Bolton in the reasonably near future.

Ms Eagle: Is not it a damning indictment of 14 years of Conservative rule that we are to have an Industrial Heritage Year when the Government have destroyed large swathes of British industry? All we are good at producing is museums of industrial heritage and not a good, viable industrial future for the people of this country.

Mr. Brooke: I draw the hon. Lady's attention to the reference by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) to the fact that we were talking about the residence of Samuel Crompton. We have an industrial heritage which dates back more than two centuries and it is something of which we are extremely proud.

Tourist Attractions (Signing)

9. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has had about European signs for tourist attractions.

Mr. Sproat: I have had no such representations.

Mr. Evans: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply. Is he aware that there is a rumour that an elephant is to be used as the sign for a tourist attraction? Does he agree that elephants trumpet a lot, that they are lethargic and that they are very grey? Does he agree that it might be a good idea if the lot opposite changed the red rose to an elephant?

Mr. Sproat: My hon. Friend makes his usual forthright and trenchant contributions to our deliberations.

Broadcasting Act 1990

10. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received regarding the workings of the Broadcasting Act 1990.

Mr. Brooke: I have received representations on a number of issues through meetings and correspondence with broadcasters and others, including some 90 letters from hon. Members this year up to the end of May.

Mr. Grocott: As the evidence is overwhelming, is it too much to hope that the Secretary of State will acknowledge that the Broadcasting Act 1990 was a disaster; that morale in the industry is at an all-time low and that about one third of the work force in independent television—skilled people—has been lost since the 1990 Act was passed; that there has been a steady drift of production facilities to London away from the regions and that there has been a very worrying and, indeed, frightening concentration of ownership within the industry?

British broadcasting, which was once admired throughout the world, is now drifting inexorably towards American-style broadcasting. Is it too much to hope that the Secretary of State, who is responsible for our national heritage, will acknowledge that broadcasting, which used to be part of our national heritage and which was admired, needs to be preserved and that he needs to review the 1990 Act if he is to do that?

Mr. Brooke: I would not for a moment dream of accepting the language that the hon. Gentleman used in posing the first part of his question. Indeed, many think that the transition which has flowed through the introduction of the 1990 Act has been remarkable. As to the further substance of what the hon. Gentleman said, I think that he knows from other places that I am as concerned as he is about ensuring that we retain a critical mass in British broadcasting which, as the hon. Gentleman rightly says, is admired throughout the world.

Dr. Spink: I am amazed at the Luddite attitude of the Labour party. Does not my right hon. Friend recall that it was the Labour party which opposed the introduction of ITV——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should remember that we ask questions about Government policy in Question Time.

Dr. Spink: The Labour party also opposed the introduction of Channel 4. Will my right hon. Friend join me in deploring the Labour party's continued hostility towards the extension of choice?

Madam Speaker: Order. I recall calling the hon. Gentleman to order previously on these matters. Hon.

Members must question Government policy at Question Time. The hon. Gentleman has one more minute to have another go.

Hon. Members: No.

English Tourist Board (Redundancies)

11. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he intends to meet the chairman of the English tourist board to discuss staff redundancies.

Mr. Sproat: My right hon. Friend and I intend soon to meet Adele Biss, the new chairman of the English tourist board and the British Tourist Authority, to discuss a range of issues, but I see no particular need to discuss staff redundancies.

Mr. Bayley: Given the disastrous state of the balance of payments, would it not make sense for the Government to put more resources into promoting tourism in Britain, to encourage our own citizens and citizens from abroad to go on holiday in our country? That would help our balance of payments.

Mr. Sproat: Well, the hon. Gentleman makes a fair point, but, as I said in answer to an earlier question, last year the number of tourists in this country rose by 9 per cent. In the first quarter of this year, it has risen by another 8 per cent. on top of that 9 per cent. We have good exchange rates for tourists, low interest rates and low inflation. The tourist industry is doing extremely well. In those circumstances and in view of the economic constraints which we face, the actions that were taken were, on balance, very sensible.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

Select Committees (Staff)

27. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission what is the policy of the National Audit Office in respect of secondment of professional staff to assist departmental Select Committees.

Sir Peter Hordern (Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission): The policy of the National Audit Office is to respond positively to any request to second staff to a departmental Select Committee.

Mr. Bayley: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it would be good for the staff of the National Audit Office regularly to be seconded to departmental Select Committees so that they would see how those Committees and the Public Accounts Committee complement each other in their work? On how many occasions, with the exception of the Defence Select Committee, have professional members of the staff of the National Audit Office been seconded to departmental Select Committees?

Sir Peter Hordern: There are three staff seconded to a Select Committee at present. Besides the Defence Select Committee, staff are seconded to the Social Security and Trade and Industry Select Committees. Altogether, staff are seconded to 47 organisations at home and abroad.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Fine Arts Heritage

12. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what measures he is taking to ensure the retention of Britain's fine arts heritage in this country.

The Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Peter Brooke): The Waverley system of export controls, grants to national museums and galleries, the National Heritage Memorial Fund and several capital tax concessions encourage the retention of Britain's fine arts heritage.

Mr. Carrington: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that answer. Does he agree that the Waverley rules still allow too many examples of our national heritage to leave these shores? Will he consider tightening up those rules to ensure that more funds are available for retaining our prized fine arts heritage and that galleries are given more time to raise the money necessary to retain them?

Mr. Brooke: I do not think that I would take the view that there was a failing in the Waverley rules, which are responsible for particular items being considered under export licence, but I understand the concern of a number of people about the amount of funds available to meet some of the appeals which consequently arise. In the past five years, just under half the applications that have been made have been refused and the item concerned retained in this country.

Dr. Howells: Does the Secretary of State agree also that some of the money that is required to retain some great works of art in the country might be found if fewer fat salaries were paid to the culture vultures who run the administration of the arts in Britain, and the arts councils in particular?

Mr. Brooke: The accounting behind that question must necessarily be somewhat indirect, in that the Arts Council of Great Britain is not responsible for funding applications under the Waverley rules, but the Government have recently employed consultants to review the Arts Council.

Mr. Cormack: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the system can work satisfactorily only if the in-lieu system works satisfactorily? In that context, has he seen the article in today's issue of *The Daily Telegraph* by Mr. Godfrey Barker, which speculates about the future of the Museums and Galleries Commission? Will my right hon. Friend give an assurance that the commission will not be wound up, as it is not populated by fat cats receiving large salaries, to quote the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells)?

Mr. Brooke: I have seen the article to which my hon. Friend refers. I can give him a categorical assurance that there is no intention of winding up the Museums and Galleries Commission.

Film Industry

15. **Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the current level of support for the British film industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: My Department plans to spend £24·4 million on film support in 1993-94. In the 1979-80 financial year, direct Government support for film amounted to

some £12·5 million at 1993 prices. The Eady levy on box office receipts raised a further £17·25 million at 1993 prices in support of the film industry.

Ms Eagle: Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that, as was said earlier, our film industry has many great talents in all areas of production—acting, directing and so on—but that other film industries around the world are being given a great deal of Government support to attract investment mainly from America and having production happen in their countries? What is the Government's reaction to what is happening in the global film market? What will his Department do to ensure that Britain's national pool of talent is preserved and expanded?

Mr. Brooke: I salute the hon. Lady for the seriousness of her question. In terms of support in other parts of the Community—perhaps I should confine myself to that at this juncture—some of the subsidy support is going straightforwardly on liguistic grounds for the cultural side of film and ensuring that films continue to be made in specific languages. I have taken the trouble to find out what assistance is available throughout the film industry and what it is in terms of the rest of the world. Because of that, we are having the conversations that I described earlier with different sectors of the industry.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Disabled Access

28. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what expenditure has been authorised for accessibility for the disabled to the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. A. J. Beith (on behalf of the House of Commons Commission): A comprehensive review of disabled access to the main public areas of the Palace of Westminster has recently been completed by a specialist consultant architect. That report is expected to be submitted to the Accommodation and Works Committee later this month. Cost estimates and a programme of work will be prepared once the Committee's recommendations are known. It is not possible to provide any meaningful estimate of the cost of work already undertaken as part of an ongoing policy to improve access for disabled persons.

Mr. Corbyn: It is more than 20 years since the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act was passed by the House. I am sure that there are many who feel that it is inadequate that it should take so long before the House of Commons Commission produces a report on the matter. I ask the right hon. Member representing the Commission to expedite the report and publish it as quickly as possible, and recognise that the House is fundamentally inaccessible to many people who have sight difficulties, those who need wheelchair access, those who have hearing difficulties or those who simply want to come into the building to watch proceedings in their Parliament.

It is a disgrace that, in 1993, we still do not have full accessibility other than people in wheelchairs being taken in goods lifts by a different route. I ask the right hon. Gentleman to ensure that the report is not simply published and costed immediately but acted on immediately so that this disgrace and insult to the disabled of our country is ended once and for all.

Mr. Beith: It was the dissatisfaction of gaining access to the building for disabled people that led to the appointment of one of the most experienced and respected specialist architects in this field to produce the report. There will be wide support for the sense of urgency that the hon. Gentleman gives to the matter, and I will certainly communicate that to the Committee.

Mr. Matthew Banks: Does the right hon. Member representing the Commission agree that it is entirely right for the House to put its house in order before it seeks to legislate for other buildings further throughout the United Kingdom?

Mr. Beith: The hon. Gentleman advances a good principle.

Visitors

29. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Chairman of the Finance and Services Committee what financial provision has been made for improvements to the arrangements for hon. Members' visitors to Westminster.

Mr. Paul Channon (Chairman of the Finance and Services Committee): The first report from the Catering Committee on refreshment provision for line of route visitors, published on 25 May, recommends certain improvements in facilities for visitors, including a visitors' centre. These have yet to be costed, and their implementation will need to be co-ordinated with the results of the Catering Committee's current inquiry into proposals to modernise the kitchens and review the House's refreshment facilities. Specific provision will have to await any necessary approval by the relevant authorities and the House.

Mr. Flynn: Does the hon. Member agree that the House is looking for swift action on those proposals? Will he look at another matter, which causes great frustration; the absurd regulation—for a Government in the mood for getting rid of regulations—which limits the number of people in a hon. Member's party to 16? The usual number in such a party is a busload, 48. That regulation causes great frustration, irritation and extra work for hon. Members, their staff and the House of Commons staff. Can the limit be increased to 48?

Mr. Channon: The second part of the hon. Gentleman's question is not a matter for me, but I will ensure that what he has said is noted by the relevant authorities. As to the first part of his question, the difficulty about the visitors' centre is that if the Westminster Hall cafeteria is turned into a visitors' centre, alternative accommodation will have to be provided for those who currently use it—and there is a great shortage of space in the House.

Sir Anthony Grant: On the second point raised by the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), what is intolerable is the inconvenience and discomfort experienced by parties we bring here to see the House of Commons and the House of Lords. To take a party round the House nowadays is like getting in between the British Lions and New Zealand All Blacks rugby scrum. Rather

than increase the numbers, either there should be better organisation of the timing at which parties visit, or the numbers allowed should be smaller.

Mr. Channon: I note what my hon. Friend says. Again, I will ensure that the relevant authorities examine that matter.

Smoking

30. **Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, if he will make a statement on the policy with regard to smoking in the Palace of Westminster; and what plans he has to review this.

Mr. Beith: By long-established practice, there are certain parts of the House where smoking is not permitted, such as the Chamber, the Members' Lobby and part of the Tea Room. The Administration, Accommodation and Works and Catering Committees, and the Board of Management, have responsibility to determine whether any changes need to be made in areas for which they are responsible.

Mr. Austin-Walker: Is the right hon. Member aware of the report of the Health Education Authority on the impact of passive smoking? Is he further aware of a recent out-of-court settlement involving a local authority and a claim against it for compensation from one of its employees? Does he not think, in the light of the advice given by the Health Education Authority, that he has responsibility for the health and safety of people who work in the Palace of Westminster? Is not the House somewhat behind public authorities throughout the country, and many private employers, in the provision of a healthy and safe environment in which to work?

Mr. Beith: I am aware of all those matters. If it were left to me, smoking would be confined to a small area on the roof. The areas for which the Commission is responsible are those in which employees of the House work. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for drawing the matter to the Commission's attention, and it will be placed on the agenda. Hon. Members generally have a responsibility to the staff they employ—including those in these buildings—for the atmosphere and conditions in which they work.

Health and Safety Checks

31. **Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, how frequently health and safety checks are carried out on office accommodation occupied by hon. Members and staff.

Mr. Beith: Regular safety checks of offices are carried out by departmental safety representatives, staff of the Parliamentary Works Directorate and the Fire Safety Manager. In addition, the Occupational Health Manager carries out visits to Members, Members' staff and staff of the House to give advice on health and safety matters. It is not possible to provide detailed statistics on the frequency of these various checks.

Mrs. Campbell: Does the right hon. Member share my concern that we ask staff to occupy accommodation which is subject to less rigorous health and safety checks than that of outside organisations? May I draw his attention to the building which I occupy where there has not been a fire practice arranged in the past year, as far as I am aware, and where fire doors are frequently left propped open?

Mr. Beith: It is the policy of the Commission that checks and procedures in the House should be no less rigorous than those in force elsewhere. The hon. Lady's point will be drawn to the attention of the appropriate authorities.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Can the right hon. Gentleman say whether he provides written records of the inspections, so that people can see that we are complying with all the regulations that Opposition Members would like to see introduced by the European social charter?

Mr. Beith: I believe that many of the checks to which I have referred are the subject of written records. If I can give the hon. Gentleman any more information on that point, I will certainly do so.

Line of Route (Facilities)

32. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Chairman of the Finance and Services Committee what financial provision is being directed towards improving facilities for members of the public on the line of route.

Mr. Channon: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago to his hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn).

Mr. Skinner: Yes, I was listening to that. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, when I took a party of disabled people round this place, we got into Westminster Hall and they could not get to a toilet there without climbing the stairs to the one in the Jubilee Room or going down the stairs to an interview room? Will he ensure that toilets are introduced that are suitable for the disabled? If it is possible for this mother of Parliaments to have 16 bars and boozers, there ought to be decent toilets for the disabled.

Mr. Channon: I have some sympathy for the point that the hon. Gentleman raises. He will have heard the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) announce a moment ago that there is to be a comprehensive study of the House and the needs of the disabled. Indeed, if the new visitors' centre is created, that will resolve the problem.

Working Hours

34. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Lord President of the Council whether he is now in a position to report on his discussions on the hours of work of the House; and if he will make a statement.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): Discussions are continuing through the usual channels. Meanwhile, every effort is being made to arrange the business of the House in a way which reflects the recommendations of the Jopling report.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Leader of the House aware that in 1970 there were more hours worked in this place than are worked at the present time, and that it seems that, if the recommendations go ahead, there will be more opportunities for people to go on trips, which have gone

up by 10 per cent. in the intervening 23 years? There are 15 per cent. more moonlighting jobs in the 23 years. Will he, therefore, bear in mind that, if the Government go to the European Assembly and argue the toss against a 48-hour week for people outside this place, it is bordering on hypocrisy to say that hon. Members can do a 30-hour week, yet those outside the House have to do more than 48?

Mr. Newton: I will merely observe, as generously as I can manage, to the hon. Gentleman that I should be very surprised, knowing him, if he did not work at least as many hours as the difference between 30 and 48—without validating his figures—in service to his constituents in other ways. I am absolutely certain that most other hon. Members put in at least as many hours, and, indeed, many more. It is because of the desire to meet the many other requests, demands and needs of our constituents in other ways than by attending the House that there is the demand for some further reform of the hours.

As for the rest of the hon. Gentleman's question, I cannot validate the statistics that he has given, but from my recollection of the first two Parliaments of which I was a Member, from 1974 to 1979, the House did sit rather longer hours than it does now. That is perhaps some measure of the progress that has been made, and I know that this will be welcome to my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) as some indication of the progress that has been made already by informal means.

Mr. Jopling: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is doubtful whether any hon. Members work less than 48 hours a week? Does he recall that, in the report of the Select Committee, we pointed out that the House sits more hours and days than almost any other assembly in the western world? Does he agree that the unanimous report on an all-party basis has been lying on the table for long enough? Is it not time that the shadow Cabinet got its act together and came to a conclusion, and allowed the House reach its agreement on the basis of the report of the Select Committee, which has broad acceptance and welcome throughout the House?

Mr. Newton: I certainly endorse what my right hon. Friend says about the basis on which his Committee's important report was made. My opposite number, the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) is unable to be here today, but the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), who deputises for her, will have heard what has been said and will, I hope, transmit the message.

Mr. Maxton: Does the Lord President of the Council agree that the best way to reduce the working hours in this place is to devolve a large part of the business elsewhere by the establishment of a Scottish parliament, a Welsh parliament and, if required, regional parliaments throughout the rest of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Newton: No, I do not agree with that. I agree that new opportunities can perhaps be created for debate on Scottish issues in the ways outlined by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. We shall seek to make progress on those matters in the same way as on the report of the Jopling committee.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: We shall take the statement first.

Flooding (Wales)

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. John Redwood): On Thursday and Friday last, several areas of Wales experienced very heavy thunderstorms which resulted in local but very severe flooding, particularly in the Llandudno area and Cardigan. I am sure the whole House would want to join me in sending our sympathy to all those whose homes have been damaged and lives affected by the disaster.

I am pleased to say that, as a result of strenuous efforts by the various service organisations and authorities, the flood waters have now been largely drained and cleaning up is in progress. The weather forecast is for some more moderate rain but not thunderstorms, which caused last week's events. I hope—as I am sure does the House—that the weather allows the clean-up to continue unimpeded.

I am sure many hon. Members will have seen pictures of the flooding on television. I visited the areas affected at Llandudno and heard first hand accounts from residents and officials. More than 5 in of rain fell in four hours and water was flowing in sheets off the hillsides. The streams and drains just could not cope. Many properties that would not normally expect to be at risk from flooding had water flowing right through them, including the ground floor of the local hospital. Those at the bottom of the hills fared even worse as the water collected. Pumps which normally drain the area were put out of action as they were overwhelmed by huge and unexpected quantities of water. We were very fortunate not to suffer any loss of life in those incidents.

The damage has been very extensive, with 500 to 600 people in the Aberconwy area having to be evacuated from their homes. I understand that the number of properties affected in some way is very much greater, with many families living upstairs or living in apartments in upper floors of blocks. Damage to the hospitals and their equipment is going to be extensive, particularly at the Llandudno general hospital, which was worst affected. There is also considerable damage to roads and services.

In the Cardigan area, the damage does not appear quite as extensive, but is nevertheless quite severe in places. Up to 100 properties seem to be affected and a few people, mainly elderly, have had to be evacuated. I am told that there is extensive damage to highways and other utilities.

Much of the praise for dealing with matters so well must go to the emergency services, particularly the fire brigades, the local authorities, hospital staff and the National Rivers Authority. Welsh Water has also been involved. I am sure that all hon. Members would wish to join me in expressing appreciation for the dedicated work of that organisation, and for the work of the voluntary services.

Relief under the Bellwin scheme will be available to local authorities for emergency work. That will be provided as usual—85 per cent. of eligible expenditure over the threshold for each authority will be paid for. Officials are writing to authorities setting out the details of the scheme, and a copy of that letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

We are also in close touch with Gwynedd health authority to gauge the scale of problems associated with the flooding of the hospital. Once the picture is clear, the Welsh Office will provide whatever assistance is required, above the usual threshold, from the pool of finance that is held for such incidents.

I would like also to thank my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for his diligence in visiting residents affected in Llandudno and for keeping me informed following my visit.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): I thank the Secretary of State for his statement. I should like, on behalf of the Opposition, to express sympathy to the victims of the flood and to join the Secretary of State in paying tribute to the magnificent efforts of the emergency services, the National Rivers Authority and the voluntary services.

The Secretary of State has outlined the extent of the damage. I am particularly concerned that the hands of the local authorities involved should be freed so that they may respond to the crisis and offer immediate assistance to the scores of families who will be unable for a number of months to return to their homes. Millions of pounds' worth of damage has been done. The cost to local authorities of repairs—especially repairs to houses and roads—will be considerable. I understand at this early stage that about 500 council properties have been damaged and that an initial estimate is that Aberconwy borough council is faced with a repair bill of at least £2 million. Gwynedd county council faces a repair bill estimated to be in excess of £1 million for the repair of flood damage to roads. The north Wales constabulary will have to meet a large bill for overtime, and the work of the Gwynedd and Clwyd fire brigades has added to the cost of the floods. Perhaps the Secretary of State can say what extra resources will be provided for the police and fire services.

It is estimated that about 2,500 people have been displaced as a result of the flooding. Does the Secretary of State intend to offer individual compensation for victims, especially those who are not adequately covered by personal insurance? Will he immediately contact the insurance companies to ensure that claims are dealt with quickly and without any unnecessary or bureaucratic delay?

Can the Secretary of State guarantee that the Welsh Office will provide adequate resources to cover the losses incurred by the local authorities? The last time the Bellwin formula was invoked—in December last year, in south Wales—Welsh Office aid was not forthcoming, despite the assurances of the previous Secretary of State, and the burden fell on local government, already under pressure from under-resourcing. Mid Glamorgan county council, for example, had to find £350,000, having received not a penny piece in aid from the Government.

Perhaps the Secretary of State will confirm precisely what the Bellwin formula covers. Does it include structural damage to council housing and to roads? Can the right hon. Gentleman confirm that, if the Bellwin thresholds are not reached, Government money will nevertheless be available to cover the costs in full? It is ironic that the worst-hit council—Aberconwy—is the only one in Wales to be charge-capped. It has already been required to cut its budget by £167,000, and any additional expenditure incurred by it under the Bellwin formula will mean immediate cuts elsewhere in vital public services. To restore confidence, will the Secretary of State announce today the end of charge capping?

The people of Aberconwy have the Minister of State as their local Member of Parliament. As the Secretary of State has said, his right hon. Friend has been vigorous and forthcoming on behalf of those people. Other areas of Wales, especially Dyfed, have been similarly affected. That being the case, can the Secretary of State guarantee that equivalent levels of help will be available to them and to any other areas that might suffer this misfortune in the future?

Mr. Redwood: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for agreeing with the sentiments that I expressed about the work of the voluntary services and the other bodies involved in the clean up and for his expressions of sympathy for those affected by the disaster.

I can assure the hon. Gentleman that, following legitimate claims under the Bellwin formula, assistance will be prompt. When the claims come in, I shall make it a personal concern to ensure that the money is forthcoming as rapidly as possible. Ninety per cent. of a reasonable claim will be met as quickly as may be, and the balance will be paid once the audited work has been completed. We cannot yet confirm that, because, as the hon. Gentleman has said, the amount involved will be many millions of pounds. Obviously, we await a proper assessment. If many millions of pounds of extra revenue expenditure are incurred, then the formula allows us to meet those claims. All claims under the scheme will be considered promptly, and officials will follow up, if there are uncertainties with the local authority, to ensure the scheme's smooth operation.

The scheme covers all reasonable revenue expenditure incurred in putting matters right in the immediate clean up, and temporary accommodation for people who have been affected.

Of course, the scheme will cover the overtime of the public services that the hon. Gentleman mentioned.

As for individual compensation, I believe that there is to be a mayoral appeal. I will take up the hon. Gentleman's point about the speed of insurance claims, and I will make a point of ensuring that the insurance companies know that we want the claims settled as promptly as possible. It is correct that most people are insured; in such cases the insurance companies should be forthcoming with the money—that is why people insure against this sort of eventuality.

The capping of Aberconwy council is a separate issue. I shall look at it shortly; I have not yet come to a decision. When I have, I will notify the House in the usual way.

I can assure the House that any other affected area will get similar treatment. If a local authority elsewhere in Wales incurs this sort of expenditure, it too can claim, and if it has legitimate claims they will be met under the Bellwin formula, just as surely as they will be in my right hon. Friend's constituency.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his visit to the flooded areas of north Wales was greatly appreciated by everyone there, particularly because it showed, at a very early stage, his commitment to the people of Wales?

Mr. Redwood: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's kind remarks. I certainly learned a lot from the visit. It made me aware of just how quickly we need to get this operation into effect.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): May I join the Secretary of State and the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) in their praise for the emergency services, who did a marvellous job, and for others? I understand that members of the health authority were on their hands and knees mopping up in Llandudno general hospital immediately after the flooding.

I also ask the Secretary of State to recognise the great stoicism and courage that local residents have shown in facing up to the emergency.

I understand from contacts with Aberconwy district that many local people are reluctant to apply for social fund loans because they believe that they will be hounded to repay them when they are unable to do so. Will the right hon. Gentleman assure the House and local residents that he will contact the Department of Social Security to ensure that there is great forbearance in pursuing the repayment of loans, especially by pensioners, many of whom have had to cut insurance from their budgets? Will he also investigate whether the fund or the Welsh Office can provide grants that would enable people to meet essential expenditure which they otherwise cannot afford?

I also join the hon. Member for Caerphilly in urging the Secretary of State to ensure that this disaster is taken into account when he considers what to do about the capping of Aberconwy council.

Mr. Redwood: The hon. and learned Gentleman is right to say that many residents in the affected area were responsible for acts of heroism and hard work in dealing with the immediate aftermath of the disaster. Like him, I wish to praise their efforts.

I am also delighted that many people in the health authority did such an excellent job, so that by the time I visited the hospital, not many hours after the flood, it was for the most part clean, thanks to their great efforts.

The hon. and learned Gentleman may also like to know that the Territorial Army has played a leading part in the clean-up operations. I believe that today a platoon of the Staffordshire regiment will also assist. That can be covered under the arrangements that I have described for the money.

I will look into the question of social fund loans. Like the hon. and learned Gentleman, I would not want attempts to enforce repayment from those who clearly cannot repay, especially if their home lives have been badly disrupted by the disaster.

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): May I thank the Secretary of State for his statement and for his visit to north Wales? He will know, as I do, that some of the most poignant images that we have seen are those of people who have, unfortunately, not made insurance arrangements and who appear to have lost everything. In the circumstances, I ask my right hon. Friend closely to examine what can be done to assist those people. The people of north Wales have the sympathy of all my constituents.

I have been in touch with the chief executives of each of my councils today. They have not been so badly affected by the heavy rain of the past few days, but my right hon. Friend will be aware that there has been an embankment slippage on the heart of Wales line, which has brought back images of the Glanrhyd rail disaster.

As a by-product of those events, will my right hon. Friend confirm that he will speak to his right hon. Friend

[Mr. Jonathan Evans]

the Secretary of State for Transport to ensure that steps are taken under the railway privatisation arrangements to ensure that if, flooding damages the permanent way proper arrangements will be in place to meet the cost of its reinstatement?

Mr. Redwood: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that important point, which I shall take up with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. It is important that such facilities are properly and regularly inspected and that any remedial works are undertaken. That is also true of tips and other sites where there could be movement in heavy rains, and I shall ensure that they are properly inspected. They are inspected regularly.

I appreciate that, although my hon. Friend's constituents were not as badly affected as the people I described—especially those in Llandudno—they also suffered from the storms and I express my sympathy with them, as does my hon. Friend. As to those who are uninsured, I believe that a mayoral fund may help, and I shall examine the terms of that fund to find out whether the Government ought to do anything more.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Were there any other recent floods prior to the distressing series of floods in the Llandudno area? Also, before those floods, had the Welsh Water authority been asked to invest in improving the infrastructure to guard against flooding?

Mr. Redwood: As the hon. Gentleman knows, there have been previous cases, which the House debated, for example, when the formula was similarly brought into operation. As a result of that, and of good housekeeping, there is a regular review of flood prevention and anti-flood devices. The Government, the water authorities and the National Rivers Authority have been involved. The work continues, and if more schemes are forthcoming which are suitable for investment, I would be happy to be associated with them.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): As someone whose constituency was severely hit by flooding earlier in the week, I join in the sympathy expressed by the House to all those who suffered in Wales. However, drawing on his experience as the Minister with responsibility for local government, can my right hon. Friend give an assurance that the help that the Government are rightly giving the people of Wales through the Bellwin rules will be applied equally, not just to other councils in the Principality, but to councils in England, and that the rules apply in England and Wales? If he is unable to give the answer, could he——

Madam Speaker: Order. There are procedures by which the hon. Gentleman can put his question to the appropriate Minister. He knows full well that we are dealing with a Welsh issue and with the Secretary of State for Wales. I will not allow a question to be put to a Minister who has no responsibility. I am sure that the Minister would like to answer the first part of the question.

Mr. Redwood: I am grateful, Madam Speaker, and I understand my hon. Friend's wish to ask such a question. My hon. and right hon. Friends in the Department of the Environment would tell my hon. Friend that no request has been received from any Cornish council. They would consider one if it were made. In the case of Wales, we were in touch with councils which clearly wanted the Bellwin formula to be brought into operation. We have responded rapidly for that reason, and the need was very great.

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): I too join in the congratulations to the emergency services during the past two or three days. Their work has been excellent and, when we talk about compulsory competitive tendering, it is important to remember the work that they have done in very difficult circumstances.

Can the Secretary of State confirm that in Dyfed's case, for instance, the Bellwin formula will not be activated and therefore the county council will not get a penny piece of grant aid unless it spends more than £550,000 in the next two months? It would be wrong if, as a result of spending less than is allowed under the Bellwin formula, other services has to be cut to pay for repairs to bridges and roads in the county. The Bellwin formula needs to be reformed so that it refers not just to 85 per cent. grant aid above the threshold but to 85 per cent. of all expenditure incurred.

Mr. Redwood: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman. Perhaps the formula works for districts in his area and not for the county. We shall have to see how much damage was done and how much expenditure is necessary. It is normal for councils to have some contingency provision in their budgets, and this is exactly the type of awful contingency for which such provisions are made. Of course, contingency funds are larger for large counties than for small districts. The Bellwin scheme deals with those large sums relative to the local authority's budget for which the authority could not have been expected to make provision itself. If that is the case in the hon. Gentleman's area at council or district level, Bellwin money will be available in exactly the way that I hope he would want.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Apart from insurance, to which my right hon. Friend has referred, has he had time to consider the anxieties of people in Wales whose houses might suffer long-term damage from waterlogging? In view of my hon. Friend's extensive environmental experience, would he consider issuing advice to householders on how best to protect wood, plaster and electrical wiring in their houses in the long term?

Mr. Redwood: I shall discuss that matter with my officials to see whether there is anything that we can do by way of extra guidance. The health authority has already issued guidance on immediate health issues; and my hon. Friend makes another important point about the long-term stability of the housing stock.

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): No doubt on his journey from Llangollen to Llandudno the Minister did not travel by rail. I remind him that not one train is running there today and that some damage has been occasioned to the railway line. Will he raise that matter immediately with the Secretary of State for Transport, so that the line is not further run down? I also pay tribute to the relief workers of Gwynedd county council and Conwy borough council and people in the emergency services.

I have two important questions for the Minister. First, similar flooding has occurred in parts of Llandudno in the past five years. Why? Secondly, what lessons have the Government learnt from the similar incidents of

Towyn-Abergele? The real tragedy of that situation was that many people, especially the elderly, were uninsured. To leave matters to a mayoral fund is piffling and is not the answer. The Government must act now. They cannot wait for pensioners to chip into a mayoral fund. That is beyond belief. I respectfully suggest to the Minister that now is the time to take the bull by the horns.

Mr. Redwood: I am assured by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State that the main north Wales railway line is functioning. Of course my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will be interested in the branch lines to which the hon. Gentleman refers. The hon. Gentleman will be interested to know that I went to and from Cardiff today by rail; I use rail wherever possible for my journeys.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about similar flooding in the past, but I do not think that the circumstances were entirely the same. It is difficult to design a drainage system that will cope with more than 5 in of rain in three hours. That results in a staggering amount of water, and it led to the great problems that we have seen. We will look at what happened to see whether anything can be done to prevent a future recurrence of the problem. The sheer weight and scale of the water was massive, making it difficult for any system to cope, even including quite new pumping systems.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): The hearts of my constituents go out to people in other parts of Wales who have suffered flooding: my constituents know about it only too well as it happened to them last winter. Like me, they will also hope that the householders who have been mentioned in the Chamber will be treated better than the householders of Pontypridd, many of whom were uninsured and had to make do with stoicism, about which the Secretary of State spoke earlier, in putting their houses right. If it had not been for the sterling work undertaken by Mid Glamorgan county council, Taff Ely borough council and the National Rivers Authority, those people's homes would still be flooded and in a mess.

Mr. Redwood: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. I am glad that he thinks that the arrangements today are more satisfactory than was the case for Pontypridd. It is our intention to do everything that we reasonably can to ensure a smooth clean-up and get people back to their homes as quickly as possible.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Is not it a fact that the Bellwin formula has nothing to do with providing help to people who need the aid but is only a fig leaf to hide the inadequacy of what the Government intend to offer people in need? How much has been paid in Wales under the Bellwin formula over the past five years?

Mr. Redwood: I do not have that figure to hand. I shall write to the right hon. Gentleman with it. The Bellwin formula is not a fig leaf. It is important assistance and it takes care of the bulk of the extra costs that local authorities incur as a result of a disaster of that nature. Where we have direct responsibility, as in the case of the hospital, that too will be put right at public expense through central taxpayer's reserves from the health authority. We must do everything in our power to put those things right. The right hon. Gentleman's charge is simply incorrect.

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): Does the Secretary of State agree that we must be sceptical about the views of experts who said at the weekend that floods occur once every century? The last time that we had to deal with this problem was not a century ago but six months ago. We asked his predecessor then for a thorough, proper and independent survey of the river banks and coastlines of Wales, to be conducted by the Welsh Office, local authorities and the National Rivers Authority. Does the Minister agree that that is the only long-term measure for the prevention of flooding and that that is the answer to the problems that we have seen over the past few days?

Mr. Redwood: I shall look thoroughly at what happened to see whether something can be done to make a recurrence of that awful event less likely. However, I shall repeat what I said earlier: the amount of rainfall was unprecedented. It was extreme. It was difficult for the drains to handle the water—even had they been considerably larger, it would still have been difficult for them to handle it—because of its sheer force and intensity.

Points of Order

3.57 pm

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The House will know that parts of Cornwall and Devon have suffered similar devastation from flooding in recent days, including the weekend. I understand that the local authorities concerned are making an application to the Department of the Environment this afternoon as there has been not only devastation to property and roads but tragic loss of life.

I wonder whether you, Madam Speaker, have had an application from Ministers at the Department of the Environment to make an equal and comparable statement to the one made this afternoon by the Secretary of State for Wales? As yet, we have had no statement and no reassurance. People in the west country feel that there are double standards in this matter. If there has been an application, will there be a statement tomorrow?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker, I hope that I can be helpful.

I am aware that heavy rain and strong winds have caused severe flooding in many parts of England, including Cornwall. I am sure that the whole House wishes to express its condolences to the families of those who have died as a consequence of the flooding. However, as of yet, no requests for financial assistance have been received by——

Madam Speaker: Order. Is the Minister making a statement? I thought that he was responding to a point of order. The hon. Gentleman is placing me in some difficulty. I cannot allow a statement. If the hon. Gentleman is responding to a point of order, will he do so briefly?

Mr. Baldry: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. If local authorities in Cornwall make applications under the Bellwin rules, they will be considered promptly and carefully. As yet, no application has been made.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I think that the House is fully aware that the original question put to me concerned whether I had been told by a Minister that the Government were seeking to make a further statement on the flooding that, sadly, has affected many parts of the country. The answer to the point of order is that I have not been told by a Minister that he wishes to make a statement. The Minister has done his best to be helpful in this matter. I cannot allow questions to the Minister.

Mr. Taylor: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is it a different point of order?

Mr. Taylor: Yes.

Madam Speaker: In that case, I will hear it.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I think that the Minister has just attempted to make a statement. Would it not be appropriate for him to make a full statement to the House, and to answer questions?

Madam Speaker: I have already dealt with that point: I have said that the Minister was not making a statment, but trying to be helpful in response to a point of order. It has been made clear to Ministers that hon. Members want a statement to be made; we must leave it at that.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Are you aware that the Sunday lunches of many of your parliamentary colleagues were greatly enhanced by your cheerful and elegant choice of records on "Desert Island Discs"?

May I ask why we were allowed only five minutes, rather than 10, for questions to the Lord President of the Council, for the first time in living memory? I had expected to be able to raise the cases of Simon Dunn—the prisoner who has been taken at Umm Qasr—and Kai Sondermann. In the context of the terrible things that have been happening to Iraqi babies—which I outlined on Friday, at columns 576-82—should not a Government statement be made about the cases of those unfortunate prisoners, the whole question of sanctions and the need for discussions about sanctions to take place with Iraq before anything is done about the prisoners?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is very cunning. Many of us are very sad that his question was not reached today, but he must not try to make that a point of order for me. The length of time allowed for Ministers to answer questions is a matter for the usual channels, not for me.

I thank the hon. Gentleman for his earlier remarks. I hope he noted that I chose to take the Mace with me to the desert island: that might have given the House a few more days' recess until I was found.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. This is a separate point of order, of which I gave you notice, about a matter affecting hon. Members' right to intervene in immigration cases—a most important right, which you will undoubtedly have exercised on numerous occasions in your constituency.

On Friday night, I was informed that a constituent, Mrs. Abida Parveen, had been arrested, and was to be deported to Pakistan on Saturday. I contacted Bradford police at 10.30 pm; however, the custody officer refused to disclose details of the arrangements for her deportation, the name or telephone number of the immigration officer concerned, the contact telephone number for her solicitor or the duty solicitor, and even information about the arrangements that were being made.

It is clear that the existing arrangements for hon. Members to make representations in emergency immigration cases—especially those concerning threatened deportation—have broken down. Will you consider—I emphasise the word "consider"—convening a Speaker's conference of interested parties in the House with the Home Office, the immigration service and the police, to ensure that new arrangements can be devised to give hon. Members a proper opportunity to intervene promptly and effectively, with the full co-operation of all the agencies concerned?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is a long-standing Member of the House. He is raising with me a matter of Government policy. As a long-standing Member of Parliament, he knows that he could raise the matter

directly with the Minister concerned by various methods and procedures, and on various occasions, and receive the full reply that I know he seeks.

Mr. Madden: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. As you have rightly said, the existing arrangements are the Home Secretary's responsibility. It is now self-evident to many hon. Members that those arrangements have broken down. As the House constitutes the thin line between constituents' being deported—in many cases, unfairly and unlawfully—and their being given their full right to make representations, along with hon. Members, I am now appealing to you, Madam Speaker. I am asking whether you, as guardian of the rights of hon. Members and those of the House, will convene a conference which, hopefully, will be able to reach a conclusion and devise proper arrangements for hon. Members to make the representations that I seek to secure.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has every right and opportunity to make representations through the usual procedures of the House. I cannot specify to him across the Floor of the House the procedures under which he could do so. If he wishes to come and see me, I shall be as helpful as possible. It is a matter for the hon. Gentleman. This is an individual case, and we must all represent our constituents to the best of our ability and in the way that the House allows us. I can take it no further at this stage.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): I am sorry to raise the question of flooding again, but could I——

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Harris: It is a point of order.

Madam Speaker: That is better.

Mr. Harris: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Can you help me with a difficulty facing the House? As you will remember, at Question Time I attempted to ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether what he was announcing for Wales was the equivalent of the system for England. You rightly said that he was not responsible for the Bellwin rules as applied to England. If I put the same question to an Environment Minister, he would no doubt say that he was not responsible for the rules in Wales.

What I and my parliamentary colleagues from Cornwall in particular are concerned to do, in the light of the flooding that we have just suffered, is to establish that the ground rules of what has been announced today by the Secretary of State for Wales also apply to England. Can you advise me, Madam Speaker, on how I can get an answer to that question?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has been here a long time. He knows that he can table a written or oral question. If he has any problem with procedure, he should apply to the usual channels, or come to see me and I shall be pleased to advise him.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Madam Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

OVERSEAS GOVERNMENTS (DEBTS)

That the draft Debts of Overseas Governments (Determination of Relevant Percentage) (Amendment) Regulations 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT (FEES)

That the draft Department of Transport (Fees) (Amendment) Order 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Question agreed to.

Orders of the Day

Housing and Urban Development Bill

(changed to

LEASEHOLD REFORM, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT BILL)

Lords amendments considered.

Ordered,

That the Lords amendments to the Housing and Urban Development Bill be considered in the following order, namely: Nos. 1 to 22, 219 to 226, 23 to 38, 227, 39 and 40, 228 to 231, 41 to 48, 232 to 244, 49 and 50, 245 to 257, 51 to 77, 258, 78 to 83, 259 to 264, 84 to 90, 265, 91 to 163, 266, 164 to 215, 267 to 278, 216 to 218 and 279 to 283.—*[Sir George Young.]*

Clause 1

THE RIGHT TO COLLECTIVE ENFRANCHISEMENT

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 3, line 17, leave out ("and") and insert ("or").

4.11 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Speaker: With this we shall consider the following Lords amendments: Nos. 5, 8, 9, 13, 20, 32, 36, 45, 46, 51, 53, 56 to 58, 60, 68, 75, 77, 78, 84, 94, 105, 106, 108 to 110, 116, 125, 129 to 131, 133, 134, 136, 140 to 142, 144, 148 to 152, 154 to 156, 160 to 162, 216, 219, 221, 223, 229, 231, 236 to 239, 243, 255, 256, 258, 260, 261, 263, 264, 271, 273 and 277.

Mr. Baldry: This is a large group of amendments. They are almost entirely drafting and technical amendments, which are required to clarify some provisions, correct cross-references and amend minor defects. They were made in response to comments received and after further consideration of the Bill elsewhere. They ensure that the Bill's provisions work more effectively. I do not intend to take the time of the House in discussing any of them individually. However, I shall mention amendment No. 216, which changes the name of the Bill to "Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Bill".

The original short title of the Bill was drafted to be as short as possible so that it could be easily referred to in other Acts and subordinate legislation and by anyone seeking to use its provisions. However, it was argued in another place that the title was not helpful as it did not refer to the leasehold provisions that take up the whole of part I and are of great interest to many people. The new title reflects the structure of the Bill and makes it clear that it covers important reforms to the leasehold system.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): We are faintly surprised that the Government decided to change the title of the Bill. The Bill's provisions for housing have been residualised and it will not create a single new home, so perhaps it is not surprising that the Government have decided to change the emphasis to leasehold enfranchisement.

I do not wish to open a debate on the issue, but I must say that the Bill creates expectations for the 750,000 leaseholders but, as I am sure will be revealed in our debate and as it has been revealed in another place and in Committee, it will short-change many leaseholders who think that they will be enfranchised but who will discover that they will not receive franchise entitlement.

The low rent test still appears in all the amendments, despite all the attempts in the House and in the other place to change it. That will disqualify many of those 750,000 people from leasehold enfranchisement. The Bill claims to give rights to leaseholders—even its title has now been changed to stress leasehold enfranchisement—but, in practice, many people will be disappointed. In practice, and on the face of the Bill, the rights that were promised in the consultation paper will be dashed on the rocks of expediency by the Government and people will not receive their entitlements.

The Labour party believes that restoring those rights is one way in which the Government can fulfil their original pledge. Only a few hours ago, the Prime Minister said that he would honour all the Conservative party's manifesto commitments, yet many of the rights promised in the original title of the Bill have been removed. In other words, the Bill will not do what the Government claimed. It will short-change many leaseholders, and a change of title will not cover up that.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 4

PREMISES EXCLUDED FROM RIGHT

Lords amendment: No. 2, in page 5, line 18, leave out from ("are") to ("and") in line 19 and insert

("neither—

(i) occupied, or intended to be occupied, for residential purposes, nor

(ii) comprised in any common parts of the premises;")

Madam Speaker: With this, we will take Lords amendment No. 3.

The Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction (Sir George Young): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendments are intended to clarify the definition of non-residential parts of premises so that the eligibility of buildings can be more easily determined.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 3 to 5 agreed to.

Clause 5

QUALIFYING TENANTS

Lords amendment: No. 6, in, page 6, line 7, at end insert—

("(2A) Subsection (1) does not apply where the immediate landlord under the lease is a registered housing association and all the flats in the premises are—

(a) particularly suitable, having regard to their location, size, design, heating systems and other features, for occupation by persons of pensionable age, and

(b) are occupied by persons of pensionable age on physically disabled persons, and

(c) have special facilities which include the services of either a resident warden or a non-resident warden and a means for calling them.")

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. Baldry.]*

Mr. Battle: I am surprised that the Government tabled the motion. Lords amendment No. 6 omits sheltered housing and accommodation that is specially adapted for

disabled and elderly people. I should have thought that it is a common sense and reasonable amendment that the Government would accept. In all other cases, the Government take away the rights of leaseholders left, right and centre by tightening the framework of the Bill, but in this case—I press the Government to give their estimate of the number of flats that are affected—when common sense would suggest that there should be an exemption to ensure that sheltered housing and specially adapted dwellings remain, they have decided to ensure that there is a right to enfranchisement. They would do far better to address the real needs of people in flats and houses who will be denied enfranchisement by the strict low-rent test and other measures, including some that they accepted in the other place.

Interestingly, when the amendment was moved in the other place, there were no Tellers, because the Chief Whip and the Deputy Chief Whip were not in the Chamber when a vote was sprung on the Government. In that sense, the Government lost it without even opposing it, yet now they come back to the House to try to repair the results of their incompetence in the other place.

It is surprising that housing association schemes are now included. The amendment would exclude leasehold schemes for elderly people from leasehold enfrachisement where the freeholder is a registered housing association. Under the Bill as drafted, leaseholders of housing association sheltered housing schemes can exercise enfranchisement where they own 100 per cent. of the leasehold interests.

The amendment seeks to exclude sheltered housing from the enfranchisement provisions. It would affect only a tiny number of schemes where the association had not received housing association grant. For housing association grant-funded schemes, the association is required to retain 20 per cent. of the equity. Under clause 6, enfranchisement would not then apply. Instead, under chapter II, the individual leaseholder would have an automatic right to renew the lease, but many housing associations have undertaken sheltered housing schemes without using housing association grants.

The amendment would affect such schemes. The proposal was not made lightly by the National Federation of Housing Associations, on behalf of all housing associations. It argues that, if the Government now decide to vote against the Lords amendment, the Bill would discriminate against elderly and disabled people, for whom special provision has been made.

Faced with the needs of an aging population, housing associations that have undertaken leasehold schemes to provide sheltered housing for elderly people are most concerned that, if leasehold enfranchisement applies to such housing it could, in time, lead to the loss of the warden service and other special provisions simply because they cost money. Ultimately, those properties could be sold to non-elderly buyers, which in turn would reduce the overall supply of sheltered accommodation at precisely the time when the need for it is increasing. According to Government figures, by the year 2001 there will be 1 million people in Britain over 85. The need for sheltered accommodation is increasing and the Government's petty approach, which will diminish stock, is damaging.

Why are the Government making such a proposal? I do not think that they have an argument. The amendment was carefully drafted to ensure that only those schemes that genuinely provide sheltered housing are included. What is more, the wording of paragraph 10 of schedule 5 to the Housing Act 1985—the Government's own housing legislation—excludes sheltered housing from the right-to-buy provision precisely because it would diminish the amount of housing stock in Britain at a time when we need a supply of sheltered housing to rent. As the amendment mirrors almost exactly the wording of paragraph 10 of schedule 5 to the 1985 Act, it seems illogical, irrational and petty that the Government should now turn against it.

It may be suggested that restrictive covenants could do the job as well as the amendment, but they could be changed by agreement between the new freeholder and leaseholders once the freehold has passed to another body. The retention of sheltered housing for its original purpose cannot therefore be guaranteed by those restrictive covenants. That could be achieved only by excluding such housing from the Bill's provisions.

I challenge the Minister—before he pushes the motion through on the nod—to tell the House how many properties will be affected and how many people will be enfranchised by the provision. He should compare and contrast that with the number of people who will be unfairly excluded from leasehold enfranchisement by the restrictive clauses that the Government have built into the Bill, and also by the further restrictive clauses that the Government have accepted from the other place.

If the clause is accepted, and housing associations' sheltered housing schemes are excluded from enfranchisement, elderly leaseholders would automatically receive the right under chapter II of the Bill to renew their lease in line with leaseholders in housing association grant-funded schemes. It could be argued—I should be interested to hear the Minister's opinion—that that right, rather than outright enfranchisement, would be more beneficial to the elderly people concerned. It would guarantee that the amount of sheltered and specially adapted accommodation to rent could be expanded.

Mr. Baldry: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman has had the opportunity to discuss the amendment with organisations such as Age Concern since it was debated in the other place.

Since the amendment was accepted in the Lords, we have received representations from organisations such as Age Concern and the Association of Retired Persons, which have expressed their dismay at the exemption from enfranchisement of such developments. The amendment is clearly discriminatory, and that is their concern. The amendment deliberately discriminates against the elderly. There is no fundamental reason why developments for the elderly and disabled that are owned by housing associations should be excluded from the scope of enfranchisement.

The hon. Gentleman has expressed a concern—also put forward by the National Federation of Housing Associations—that, once the freehold has been bought, flats may be sold to people who are neither old nor disabled. That is a misunderstanding. Flats would not necessarily move out of the sheltered housing sector. Enfranchisement does not affect the terms of leases, so any restrictive covenants which might, for instance, specify that the flats were to be let only to the elderly, will remain in force after the freehold has been bought. Such covenants in the leases of non-participants cannot be changed without the agreement of both parties to the lease. Those would include housing associations.

[Mr. Baldry]

The Lords amendment clearly discriminates against the elderly. It has met with vehement opposition from organisations such as Age Concern, and I urge the House to disagree with it.

Question put, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 243, Noes 148.

Division No. 294] **[4.22 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert G. Hughes and
Mr. Andrew Mitchell.

NOES

Ainger, Nick
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bennett, Andrew F.
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Blair, Tony
Boyce, Jimmy
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*

Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Khabra, Piara S.
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
Madden, Max
Mandelson, Peter
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Raynsford, Nick
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Wareing, Robert N
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle and
Mr. Gordon McMaster.

Question accordingly agreed to.

After Clause 5

Lords amendment: No. 7, insert the following new clause—

Qualifying tenants satisfying residence condition—

(".—(1) For the purposes of this Chapter a qualifying tenant of a flat satisfies the residence condition at any time when the condition specified in subsection (2) is satisfied with respect to him.

(2) That condition is that the tenant has occupied the flat as his only or principal home—

(a) for the last twelve months, or

(b) for periods amounting to three years in the last ten years, whether or not he has used it also for other purposes.

(3) For the purposes of subsection (2)—

(a) any reference to the tenant's flat includes a reference to part of it; and

(b) it is immaterial whether at any particular time the tenant's occupation was in right of the lease by virtue of which he is a qualifying tenant or in right of some other lease or otherwise;

but any occupation by a company or other artificial person, or (where the tenant is a corporation sole) by the corporator, shall not be regarded as occupation for the purposes of that subsection.

(4) In the case of a lease held by joint tenants—

(a) the condition specified in subsection (2) need only be satisfied with respect to one of the joint tenants; and

(b) subsection (3) shall apply accordingly (the reference to the lease by virtue of which the tenant is a qualifying tenant being read for this purpose as a reference to the lease by virtue of which the joint tenants are a qualifying tenant).")

Sir George Young: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss also Lords amendments Nos. 16, 18, 19, 22, 54, 59, 61, 63, 64, 66, 70, 222 and 225.

Sir George Young: I shall speak briefly to the amendments and then speak again if there are any issues that the House wishes to raise.

When the Bill left the House for another place, it contained no test to residence on qualifying tenants that had to be satisfied before either of the new rights—collective enfranchisement or individual lease renewal—could be exercised, but there was a strong feeling that there should be a residence qualification. Two groups of amendments constitute the Government's response. Amendments Nos. 54, 59, 61, 63, 64, 66 and 70 introduce a residence test that qualifying tenants will have to satisfy before they can obtain a new lease under the provisions of chapter 2. We have followed the principle of the test provided for in the 1967 Act that is applied to individual tenants of houses.

The remaining amendments in the group introduce a residence test for collective enfranchisement. Basically, the new test requires half of the participating tenants to be residents. The new test is intended to prevent a majority of non-resident long leaseholders from purchasing their landlord's interests. Our declared policy is that flat owners should be able to gain ownership and control of their blocks. The test does not seriously interfere with that objective but clearly signals that flat owners cannot take over if only a minority of the participants live or have lived for significant periods in their flats. That amendment will be appreciated by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

In another place, Lord Williams, representing the Labour party, said that he had sympathy with the idea of a resident test that supported the principle that companies and absentee landlords should not be allowed to take control of what he called "real people". Lord Strathclyde confirmed that these amendments will not disfranchise many blocks but will exorcise the spectre of control by an absent minority.

Mr. Battle: I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on his recent appointment, and wish him well. It is fair to say that he is the longest serving Minister in his post. I hope that his new appointment will take him into the inner sanctum of Government and perhaps a little closer to the Treasury, so that he can apply some real pressure for housing resources in the future.

[Mr. Battle]

We now move to the group of amendments, headed by amendment No. 7, that start to tighten the rights of leaseholders with regard to enfranchisement. When leaseholders examine the Bill, they will discover that the reforms are not as substantial or as far-reaching as they expected.

Sir Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): Very good.

Mr. Battle: That shows that there is still a difference between those Conservative Members who agree with the Government's manifesto commitment to give 750,000 leaseholders real enfranchisement and those Conservative Back Benchers who are fighting a rearguard action in another place and in this House to take away that right. Leaseholders will know that they have been short-changed; their expectations of leasehold reform have been raised—it is there on the face of the Bill—but in practice, the hedging and disqualifications will mean that those 750,000 leaseholders will not get enfranchisement after the Bill receives Royal Assent.

The Bill is hedged with disqualifications, and the low rent test is the primary one. A Labour Government will abolish that test. Throughout the passage of the Bill, we have said that a Labour Government are committed to abolishing that test, and we will stick with that commitment because the test is discriminatory and ensures that people who should have the right to leasehold and enfranchisement will not have that right.

Clause 7 is not as strong as the original clause, which said that there should be a three-year test of residence before people could get enfranchisement. That was pushed hard on the Government by those defending the great estates—we sometimes refer to them as the Duke of Westminster and his merry men, who are holding on to their entrenched interests. Thankfully, the Government did not agree with that argument.

We are still left with a one-year residence test. Effectively, the Government are gradually narrowing the range of eligibility. As a result of the new clauses and amendments to the Bill, the Government are limiting eligibility for enfranchisement. They will now offer such enfranchisement to but a tiny fraction of the leaseholders who expected to receive it once the Bill was enacted.

In effect, all long-term leaseholders of houses have no chance or hope of enfranchisement. The Government have offered a banner right, but they have qualified it away. They have whittled down the number of those who will be eligible. The Government have created expectations, but, in common with the citizens charter, in reality we are left with a damp squib on a dull day. Many who expected the rights that the Government promised them in the manifesto will now discover that they are not eligible to receive them.

Lord Strathclyde claimed that the Government wanted

"to keep exemption from leasehold enfranchisement to an absolute minimum"—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 9 March 1993; Vol. 543, c. 1037.]

In other words, the Government maintain that it is their intention to give enfranchisement to as many long leaseholders as possible. That will not happen.

It is important to consider the substance of Lords amendment No. 7. To insert a residence qualification into the current proposals mean that, because of the collective nature of enfranchisement, particularly of flats, any residence test will deprive those who pass it, as well as those who do not, of the chance of becoming full owners of their homes. We accept that, unlike other tests previously proposed and rejected, the new residence test will not wreck the Bill, but it could have certain repercussions.

The research of the Consumers Association, which we discussed in Committee, spelled out that a high proportion of flat owners tend to own their properties for a relatively short time. That fact, taken with the two-thirds majority requirement for enfranchisement, which has now been stiffened by the proviso relating to not less than 50 per cent. of all flats, means that any residence test is bound to have a significant and unfair effect, because it will exclude flat owners in particular from any chance of enfranchisement.

When the residence test was promoted in the other place, emphasis was placed on the hypothetical examples of the enfranchisement of properties owned by companies and foreign residents. Let us put things in perspective. I believe that the vast majority of flats are owned by ordinary British citizens, who have always lived here. Although recent economic difficulties may have forced some of them to become non-resident owners—we all know that repossessions have taken their toll and that negative equity problems have pushed people into difficulties—the residential qualification, albeit narrow, will reduce the number of those who are entitled to enfranchisement under the Bill.

The Government set out with a great intention. The Prime Minister suggested on the eve of the general election that about 750,000 leaseholders would receive the right to leasehold enfranchisement once the Government were re-elected. As in many other areas of policy, the Government have pared that offer and hedged it with disqualifications. They have built up expectations only to dash them on the rocks of Government expendiency. Those who expect to be enfranchised will, sadly, find out that they are denied that right. Sadly, they will only discover that once the Bill is enacted.

4.45 pm

Mr. Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne): I echo what the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) said about the recent honour bestowed on my right hon. Friend the Minister. I am sure that many other hon. Members are pleased to register their pleasure at that. May I also declare, for the last time, what I am told is not, strictly, an interest: I hold the leasehold of a flat in my constituency.

The Bill is an excellent piece of legislation, and it is characteristically churlish of Opposition Members to criticise it, particularly when they could muster only a measly 148 votes in the previous Division. That reveals their level of genuine interest in this important, bold and imaginative Bill, which will redeem an important and widely welcomed manifesto pledge.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the fact that the central provisions of the Bill have emerged largely unscathed from another place. It is an excellent Bill, and it has been my desire throughout its passage to ensure that the provisions offered by it are available to as many people as possible.

I appreciate the concern that underlies the new clause tabled in amendment No. 7 about speculators who may seek to advantage themselves under the Bill, instead of the

genuine leaseholders whom the Bill is designed to help. I am concerned about some of the effects of the new clause, especially when one considers the other hurdles to be negotiated under the Bill, particularly the two-thirds test.

The terms of the new clause are somewhat less onerous than a similar clause proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin), which was defeated in the House. It follows the same principle, however, and I remember saying on that occasion in February that my hon. Friend's proposed new clause could emasculate the Bill.

I have a number of concerns that I should like to raise, particularly in the context of my constituency, and in similar constituencies along the south coast. As I said in a previous debate, I am concerned about the effects of the new clause on holiday homes. Eastbourne is a popular place in which to buy such properties, and they are often purchased by perfectly ordinary people who are in no sense property speculators.

It is also important to consider the effect of the new clause on flats that are rented out for a short period or owned by people who are temporarily working abroad. Of great importance for somewhere like Eastbourne, where 30 per cent. of the population are of retirement age, is the position of retirement homes. Many people put their savings into such property in advance and anticipation of their retirement and, for a time, it is not regarded as the principal place of residence.

It is also important to consider the necessary and natural movement of people within a block of flats. That may be a more important factor in the London area, where the population is subject to greater shifts, but any block of flats is subject to a turnover of residents. In some cases, that would make for a fundamental mathematical problem in reaching the qualifications under the Bill, particularly when they are to be overlain by a new residence qualification. It is also important to consider the knock-on effect of such a proposal. That qualification, apart from making it impossible for particular individuals to qualify for enfranchisement, makes it more difficult, if not impossible, for others in a particular block of flats to qualify. Such individuals might well qualify in every other respect under the Bill.

I do not wish to hinder the progress of this important Bill; the sooner it is on the statute book the better. I wonder whether any research has been carried out, however, on the numbers likely to be directly affected by the new residence qualification. When the operation of the Bill is reviewed, as I am sure that it will be in due course, perhaps my right hon. Friend will undertake that, whenever that may be, that review will consider the effect of the new clause specificially, as well as other aspects that have been mentioned, such as the low rent test.

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): I, too, would like to raise doubts about the impact of this clause, and follow the comments of the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson), who rightly expressed concern that the impact might be to make it difficult, in certain circumstances, for leaseholders to take advantage of the provisions of the Bill.

On Report, I highlighted the phenomenon that was noticed in parts of Kensington, where one particular landlord, Smith Charity, had been involved in the practice of letting an increasing proportion of its properties to companies as a deliberate block.

I put it to the Minister that there is an obvious risk that landlords who seek to frustrate the intentions of the Bill —there is no question but that many large estates and others are deliberately seeking to prevent the Bill from having the effect that most hon. Members wish to see, which is for leaseholders to have the opportunity of enfranchisement—would naturally, as a result of this amendment, have an incentive to consider letting a significant proportion of the properties that become vacant in blocks of flats to companies, to ensure that the 50 per cent. threshold could not be met. That is an obvious loophole, which I fear may be exploited to frustrate the intentions of the legislation.

I therefore ask the Minister—adding to the comments of the hon. Member for Eastbourne—whether he will give thought to how the working of this provision is to be monitored, and what steps he intends to take to ensure that, if he receives representations from leaseholders in certain areas that their wish to enfranchise is being frustrated by the effect of this provision, this matter will once again come up for review. While we understand the perfectly reasonable wish to ensure that the benefits accrue only to bona fide leaseholders, the effect of this provision could be to frustrate some of them. I hope that the Minister will respond to this point.

I also ask him to be more specific about the numbers. If I remember correctly, he said in his opening remarks that the clause would disfranchise only a limited number of blocks. What number does his Department expect to be ruled out as a result of this provision? Will he go a bit further and tell us—as he and his colleagues have not done in the earlier stages of the Bill's passage through the House —how many leaseholders they expect to benefit from the Bill and enfranchise their homes in the course of the next few years? The Government have been strong on expressions of good intention about this Bill but very weak indeed on any forecast.

I know that the Minister will say that it is up to the leaseholders to decide, but in any matter of policy the Government have to make an estimate of the likely effect of what they are doing. Clearly, if there were no interest at all, it would be a waste of Parliament's time for us to be discussing all these very detailed, complicated and tortuous provisions. Some of us who sat on the Committee considering the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987 may wonder whether our time was well spent then, given the very limited take-up of that piece of legislation.

So I put it to the Minister that he owes the House some indication of the level of take-up that can be expected. Obviously, it will not be the full 750,000, but can we expect half that total? Can we expect 375,000 households to be seeking to enfranchise in, say, the lifetime of this Parliament, or will it be nearer 100,000 or fewer than that?

Without some indication of the extent to which the provisions of this Bill are likely to be taken up, we have to express some scepticism about whether the good intentions which the Government have expressed with regard to these measures will work through in practice to the benefit of leaseholders. We fear that the complexity of the legislation and the obstacles that undoubtedly exist, which will be to some extent compounded by this residence test, will deter bona fide leaseholders who want to buy the freehold of their homes, and prevent them from doing so.

I hope that the Minister will give us some answers on these points.

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I am grateful for this opportunity to intervene briefly. I have no wish to take up the time of the House for too long, being one of those who are anxious to see the Bill on the statute book.

At the outset, I offer my congratulations to my right hon. Friend on his appointment to the Privy Council. I sometimes think that, for his stewardship of this Bill alone, he qualifies for that privilege and honour.

I agree very much with my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson), who put the case very well.

The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) referred to the briefing material that many of us have received from the Leasehold Reform Co-ordinating Committee, which quite rightly put the case for reducing the residence qualification to the absolute minimum. Many of my constituents agree with that. Nevertheless, this Bill, as it affects leasehold reform, is controversial in both this place and the other place, and compromises inevitably have to be accepted.

I hope that this amendment will succeed, although I doubt it. I hope that the Government will feel that they can continue actively to monitor the impact of this residence qualification and, if it should prove an obstacle to the intentions of the Bill as a whole, will take the opportunity on some future occasion to rectify the matter.

Many of my constituents live in apartment blocks in the centre of London, in the city of Westminster, where there is a stable community, while others may live in apartment blocks where there is greater mobility. It is among the latter that the problem may arise, and that is an area to which I hope that we shall return on a future occasion should there be genuine difficulty.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): I begin by reminding the House of two points that I made when the Bill was before it on Report stage and Third Reading.

First, I remind the House that I am an owner of rented property, although I am advised that none of it falls within the provisions of this Bill.

Secondly, I repeat what I said on Third Reading: that, in the 28 years that I have been in this House, I can recall no piece of legislation that makes me more ashamed of what my party proposes than this wretched, miserable Bill. It is a totally lamentable Bill. To tear up agreements freely entered into by people, without duress, and to have the element of confiscation that this Bill has, is entirely against the philosophy of the party that I have represented in the House for all those years.

I am enormously unhappy about this, and I could not disagree more with my hon. Friends the Members for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson) and for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler).

However, I have to accept that amendment No. 7 is a modest improvement to the Bill. It does not make the Bill acceptable, in my view, but it is a modest improvement, and I hope very much that the House will accept it.

Sir Jerry Wiggin: I intervene very briefly to say how much I agree with the words of my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling). This is a reprehensible piece of legislation. One of its worst features is the invitation to speculation that no residence qualification would have brought. Therefore, I look upon it as a distinct improvement to the Bill that there now has to be a personal residence qualification. Those who take a different view from the Government are told that the Government made a manifesto commitment, but that commitment applied to occupied flats and was designed to help individuals. It was not intended to encourage speculation. Therefore, I believe that the provision is an essential safeguard, and I am extremely happy to see it before the House.

5 pm

Mr. Dudley Fishburn (Kensington): I shall distance myself a little from my rural hon. Friends, who find the legislation reprehensible. I have been in the House for five years, and no other piece of legislation has caused me greater pleasure. I have greeted no other legislation more willingly. It is entirely in keeping with a Conservative party which believes in wider home ownership and, above all, in practical forms of law. Our philosophy is not to believe that, in the 21st century, we should have 18th-century forms of tenure.

The Bill comes before the House with 270 Lords amendments. This afternoon and in the next months or indeed years, we cannot be fully aware of what those amendments will mean for the legislation. Therefore, I add my voice to those who hope that the Department of the Environment will officially monitor the Bill's progress over the coming years and conduct a proper review in two or three years' time. In that way, should the Bill prove to be unsatisfactory in giving the widest form of leasehold enfranchisement, the Government of the time will be able to widen it.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): I want to say how much I support the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) and my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin). The Bill is a reprehensible piece of legislation which amounts to confiscation. If I freely enter into an agreement with someone, why should someone else have the right to say that that agreement was bad—irrespective of whether I entered into it or my parents, grandparents or great-grandparents did so?

I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Minister for the honour bestowed on him in the recent honours list. It is thoroughly well deserved as he has a great knowledge of housing. However, I have made representations to him on the specific subject of the residency tests. As a chartered surveyor and property owner, I believe that it would be wrong if someone could enter into property ownership on the basis of speculation—whether they be a foreign-owned company or a foreign individual—so that they bought leasehold property with a view to making a profit out of the landlord.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way—I want to be sure exactly what he is saying. The Government have always claimed that theirs is the party of leasehold enfranchisement. If that is so, it runs contrary to what the hon. Gentleman is saying. He is saying that any contract entered into now or in the past should be enforced. He is saying that all previous leasehold enfranchisement legislation should not have been passed by the House. If I understand him correctly, his approach is at great variance with that of the Government Front-Bench team.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: All previous legislation has been freely debated in the House—much of it was passed by the Labour party. Had I been a Member of Parliament at that time I would have argued against it as hard as I could. Acts such as the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 are abhorrent.

I welcome the amendment. I do not think that it makes a bad Bill good, but it brings an element of fairness in abolishing some of the property speculation which would have been totally abhorrent.

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): Surely what is lamentable—a word which has been used over frequently in the past few minutes by some Conservative Members—is the idea that contracts on leasehold between tenant and leaseholder are based on an equal standard. It is impossible to obtain a freehold on flats, certainly in London. A freeholder holds all the cards in his or her hand, and has played those cards in a way that has had a deleterious effect on tenants.

Hon. Members have given examples of why someone should be able to be a tenant even if not currently resident in a leasehold flat. However, mention has not been made of the fact that, in the desperate recession which the country has been enduring in the past few years, families who have outgrown the size of their flats have had to move out of their homes to find a smaller place that they can afford and rent out their flats. The measure could make such families ineligible for enfranchisement.

I find it extraordinary that Conservative Members should put the housing needs of visiting business men, academics or diplomats above the needs of residents and nationals of this country, particularly in our capital city. The opportunities to obtain decent, affordable housing in this already overpressed capital are constantly decreasing. The Government have reneged on their manifesto commitments on leasehold enfranchisement. The House should vote against the measure, which does not work in the best interests of democracy and the commitment of political parties. It betrays the Government's manifesto. Most importantly, it betrays the thousands of people who are looking to the Bill to enable them to say that their home is their own.

Sir George Young: I thank the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) and my right hon. and hon. Friends for their kind words on the recognition that I have recently received. In these meritocratic days, it is nice to have an appendage to my name that has been earned, not inherited.

The hon. Member for Leeds, West started by chiding the Government for accepting an amendment that would disfranchise leaseholders. He has just marched his hon. Friends—though not many of them—through the Lobby to do just that. He insisted on dividing the House on an amendment which, had it been carried, would have disfranchised a large number of leaseholders and taken away the rights that they hoped the legislation would afford them.

The hon. Gentleman also said that the vast majority of flats were owned by ordinary people who live in them. He is right. That partly answers the reservations expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson). I should be surprised if the residence tests had a major impact in his constituency or other constituencies on the south coast.

There is provision for enabling leaseholders who are temporarily in residence abroad to participate in enfranchisement. The leaseholders of retirement homes would not be able to be participating tenants until they had moved into and occupied the retirement homes. However, it would need only 50 per cent. of the remaining participating tenants in the block to be residential. The hurdle is a little higher, which is why the provision was welcomed by some of my hon. Friends.

We have been urged to keep the matter under review. We are setting up an advisory organisation to help leaseholders achieve their entitlements under the legislation. I have no doubt that that organisation and others will let the Government know of the legislation's progress. I would hesitate to commit myself or my successors to more legislation on the subject. It is difficult to think of any more difficult legislation to pilot through the House than legislation on leasehold reform. My reasons for saying that have become manifestly clear in the past minutes.

We have made no estimates of the numbers who might benefit from the Bill. The Government's role is to give people entitlements and rights. It is entirely a matter for them how they exercise those rights. Therefore, we have set no targets for enfranchisements.

Mr. Battle: We appreciate the Minister's difficulty to a large extent. He has promised us a review, but it would be better to get the legislation right from the outset. In the other place, the Minister said:

"I strongly believe that a residence condition for qualification for collective enfranchisement in flats would not be fair . . . it would substantially reduce the number of blocks in which collective enfranchisement could take place . . . In fact I am convinced that a residence test for participation in collective enfranchisement would render unworkable this part of the Bill . . . We would end up with a worthless, discredited piece of legislation and our declared policy would not be delivered."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 9 March 1993, Vol. 543, c. 954-55]

Is that not Government policy? Is not the Minister saying that the Bill will not deliver the Government's intentions?

Sir George Young: I hope to come in a moment to the particular residency test that we are introducing, which, as the hon. Gentleman will recognise, is substantially different from some of the earlier tests that were put before this House and another place. My own view is that the new residency test will not substantially disfranchise a large number of people. As has been said, flat owners move frequently, but only half of the participating tenants have to satisfy the test. Further, it is a 12-month rather than a three-year test, for precisely that reason.

In reply to the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) I shall simply repeat what Lord Williams of Elvel said in another place on behalf of the Labour party:

"I say to the noble Lord, Lord Boardman, that our reaction to the amendment is that we agree with anything which is against absentee landlords and artificial persons but as regards residents, we have had our doubts about 'the last twelve months'."—[*Official Report*, House of Lords, 11 May 1993; Vol. 545, c. 1259.]

So, in another place, there was some support for the insertion of a residency test before enfranchisement becomes possible.

I should like to turn now to the heart of the reservations raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) and my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne. My right hon. and learned

[Sir George Young]

Friend the Home Secretary, when he was Secretary of State for the Environment, said that we did accept that there is some logic in the argument that only long leaseholders who actually live in their flats should be able to take control of the building and do something about the inevitable decline in the value of their asset, but we foresaw difficulty with the practicalities.

Our view was that a residence test for collective enfranchisement which disqualified either buildings or individual tenants would mean that in too many blocks the right of tenants to buy out their landlords would not be exercisable, so the overall policy could not be achieved. We did not apply that argument to individual lease renewal, about which there has been no debate this afternoon.

Our original objection to a residence test was that the requisite majority of tenants to trigger collective enfranchisement would, in practice, be hard to attain. That is because the turnover of lease ownership means that at any one time a significant proportion of long leaseholders in a block would not have lived in it long enough to become qualifying tenants. Further, individual blocks could move into and out of eligibility frequently, making it harder to find an opportunity to claim.

In another place, my noble Friend Lord Boardman found a way round this difficulty. His amendment, which was accepted in another place and is before the House today, applies a test to participating tenants only. It requires that not fewer than half of those who sign the initial notice meet the residence condition. Thus, the difficulty over the disqualification from enfranchisement of whole blocks of flats, because not enough of the leaseholders have lived in their flats for long enough to allow the number of qualifying tenants to pass the two-thirds threshold, is neatly bypassed.

The residence conditions differ somewhat from those that we have introduced for lease renewal, because of the different circumstances. There are alternative tests. First, there is occupation of the flat, or part of it, as an only or principal home for the preceding 12 months. Secondly, occupation for periods amounting to three years out of the last 10 will suffice. Tenants may choose what for them is the easier. The second limb of the test means that people who have recently let out their flats—for example, because they have gone abroad for a period—will not be denied the opportunity to join in collective enfranchisement. Occupation does not have to have been under the qualifying lease. Thus, for example, someone who has lived in a flat owned by his or her parents and has recently inherited the long lease will be able to participate.

These amendments represent a sensible compromise between two conflicting points of view, both of which have been expressed in this debate. They will not disfranchise many blocks, but, as I said earlier, they will exercise the spectre of control by an absent minority. Politics is the art of the possible. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North said, compromise is sometimes necessary. In my view, these amendments represent an acceptable compromise.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 8 and 9 agreed to.

Clause 7

LEASES AT A LOW RENT

Lords amendment: No. 10, in page 8, leave out lines 20 to 25 and insert—

("(b) where—

(i) the lease was entered into either on or after 1st April 1963 but before 1st April 1990, or on or after 1st April 1990 in pursuance of a contract made before that date, and

(ii) the flat had a rateable value at the date of the commencement of the lease or else at any time before 1st April 1990,")

Sir George Young: I beg to move that this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): With this, it will be convenient to take Lords amendment No. 88.

Sir George Young: These amendments will ensure that where a property never acquires a rateable value it shall be treated as if it were a lease entered into after April 1990. The test that applies to these leases is that the ground rent must not exceed £1,000 in Greater London or £250 elsewhere.

Amendment No. 10 relates to flats, and amendment No. 88 deals with houses. They will improve the test by ensuring that it can be applied to all properties, and I commend them to the House.

5.15 pm

Mr. Battle: The language in which the Minister presents his case is interesting. He says that the amendment will improve the test. In other words, it will firm up the test and make it more difficult for people to get through. Thus, the Government are once again ensuring that fewer people than was suggested will be enfranchised. It is worth recalling that the original consultation document published by the Government contained no suggestion of any low rent test. Such a test has crept in via the Bill, and the Government are now accepting it, as it were, as law. The Minister's comment that he is improving or strengthening the test suggests to me that very many more people will be disfranchised.

Sir George Young: Before the hon. Gentleman gets too carried away, let me make the point that the amendments were put forward on behalf of leaseholders. Without them, certain properties would simply be ineligible for enfranchisement because they have no rateable value. The amendments will therefore benefit leaseholders.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 11 to 32 agreed to.

Clause 17

RIGHT OF REVERSIONER TO REQUIRE EVIDENCE OF TENANT'S RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE

Lords amendment: No. 33, in page 23, line 39, leave out subsection (3) and insert—

("(3) Where—

(a) the nominee purchaser fails to comply with a requirement under subsection (1) in the case of any person within the period mentioned in subsection (2), and

(b) The initial notice would not have been given in accordance with section 11(2)(b) if—

(i) that person, and

(ii) any other person in the case of whom a like failure by the nominee purchaser has occurred.

had been neither included among the persons who gave the notice nor included among the qualifying tenants of the flats referred to in that provision,

the initial notice shall be deemed to have been withdrawn at the end of that period.")

Mr. Baldry: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The amendment is technical. It deals with the issue of deemed withdrawal of the initial notice where the nominee purchaser cannot deduce title to the property of any participating tenant. Without the amendment, failure to deduce the title of the lease of any participating tenant would cause the deemed withdrawal of the initial notice, which might prove rather harsh.

The amendment was proposed by the Law Society and the Leasehold Reform Co-ordinating Committee. It seems to make sense. It makes the procedures on enfranchisement fairer.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 34 to 88 agreed to.

Clause 62

PRICE PAYABLE BY TENANT ON ENFRANCHISEMENT BY VIRTUE OF SECTION 59 OR 60

Lords amendment proposed: No. 89, in page 65, line 17, leave out from ("shall") to end of line 18 and insert

("be determined in accordance with subsection (1A) above; but in any such case—

(a) if in determining the price so payable there falls to be taken into account any marriage value arising by virtue of the coalescence of the freehold and leasehold interests, the share of the marriage value to which the tenant is to be regarded as being entitled shall not exceed one-half of it; and

(b) section 9A below has effect for determining whether any additional amount is payable by way of compensation under that section;

and in a case where the provision (or one of the provisions) by virtue of which the right to acquire the freehold arises in section 1A(1) above, subsection (1A) above shall apply with the omission of the assumption set out in paragraph (b) of that subsection.'")

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. Baldry.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendments Nos. 90 and 265.

5.30 pm

Mr. Pike: We want to break the run and have a debate on this group of amendments, which cover important issues.

The Leasehold Enfranchisement Association and the Consumers Association are concerned about the part of the Bill affected by the amendments, and we must force the Government to explain exactly why the amendments should be accepted. We do not think that amendments Nos. 89 and 265 are necessary, but the Government may be able to convince us differently about amendment No. 90.

We have discussed the extension of rights of leasehold house owners and flat owners. The Bill updates previous legislation, especially the Leasehold Reform Act 1967. The hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) made his position clear, but I am sure that the Government would not like to oppose leasehold enfranchisement. When the hon. Gentleman made his maiden speech, I said that I hope that he would be an improvement on his predecessor, who held strong views on some issues. I hope that the view that he has expressed in this debate is not typical, because we strongly disagree with it and the Government have a different view on the way to proceed with leasehold enfranchisement.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not opposed to hon. Members having strong views. One can hold strong views and still support one's Government. I oppose the leasehold enfranchisement in part I of the Bill, but I strongly support parts II and III.

Mr. Pike: I accept what the hon. Gentleman says. However, the Conservative party's election manifesto contained a clear commitment to extend leasehold enfranchisement. The hon. Gentleman disagrees with that, and I accept that he is entitled to do so. However, I hope that he made his electors aware of the fact that he did not agree with his party on that issue.

Amendment No. 89 seems to put more restrictions on house owners than the Bill intends. Perhaps the hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury thinks that that is an improvement, but we have considerable reservations. Under the Bill as drafted, benefits to house owners are limited and do not give them any right to lease extensions, which people enfranchised under the 1967 Act have, and which flat owners will have under the new legislation.

Since the Bill left the House, Ministers have made a series of concessions to its opponents, and they tend to penalise an already disadvantaged group of leaseholders. The leaseholders who are affected will have to pay for enfranchisement under the more costly of the two formulae in the 1967 Act. The Bill has been amended by the other place to make the formula even more disadvantageous for leasehold house owners.

First, there will be a 50 per cent. minimum share of marriage value. That does not apply in other parts of the Bill. Secondly, severance costs must be paid, and that does not apply to other people covered by the Bill. Thirdly, the assumption that the tenant has any right to remain in the building at the end of the lease is removed, thus further increasing the price that is payable.

The amendments would give leasehold house owners the worst of all worlds. They certainly gain fewer rights at higher cost than other groups. I share their view that they have been singled out as sacrificial victims to appease the landlord lobby in the other place. That is why it is right to debate these important issues.

The points that I have been making were mainly those of the Consumers Association and I shall now deal with what the Leasehold Enfranchisement Association says about amendments Nos. 89 and 262:

"Amendment Number 89 . . . if allowed to stand—would effectively deny enfranchisement rights to virtually all long-term house-leaseholders. We feel . . . that the minority of house-leaseholders becoming eligible under this legislation have been used as a sacrifice for other parts of the Bill."

The Government have tried to hold firm against strong opposition. We all know what happened to the Duke of Westminster as a result of the legislation. The Government were under strong pressure and felt that they had to make a concession to get people to go along with the main drift of the Bill on enfranchisement of flats and not destroy it beyond recognition.

[Mr. Pike]

As my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) said, we debated at great length the low rent test and other measures that are unnecessarily restrictive and do not give the freedom to buy that people should enjoy. Some people think that the Bill goes too far, and in the other place there were moves to restrict it even further. It is our view and that of others, particularly those affected, that, to ensure that this part of the Bill was not completely destroyed, the Government made the concession on house owners. That was the wrong decision to take. I hope that the Minister will take seriously the concern that is expressed about Lords amendment No. 89.

The first part of the amendment deals with the marriage value and the second with the removal from the valuation calculations of the assumption that the tenant has a right to occupancy at the end of the lease. Those are both important factors, and their removal will make the Bill worse than the one that left the House of Commons a few months ago.

The special valuation base defined in the Leasehold Reform Act, as amended in 1974, has been operating for 20 years as the established formula for assessment of the cost of enfranchisement for houses, and there is now a large body of case law. From the first, the Government have repeatedly stated that houses brought into eligibility for enfranchisement by the reform would be valued on the same basis as those previously made eligible. The Minister has assured us of that at several stages in Committee and on Report.

The 1974 formula is already heavily loaded against the leaseholder because of the unequal professional representation in early cases. The first case, the landmark Norfolk case, where the tenant represented himself against the landlord represented by Nigel Hague QC, now a judge and the author of the standard work on the subject, and the Grosvenor Estates' long-time solicitors Boodle Hatfield, resulted in a precedent award of 275 per cent. in the profit to the landlord. That was the old issue of profit and value and the old difficulty of assessing what the value should be as a result of the apportionment and the concept of marriage value, which we have debated so much in our consideration of the Bill.

The concept of marriage value has arisen out of the Leasehold Reform Act, but no set provision was made for it in the 1974 formula, and its apportionment has been a matter of negotiation, although 50 per cent. to each party has been the normal division. The new amendment will mean that the landlord must receive at least half the marriage value. That underlines the bottom point below which one cannot go. In that respect, there is a reduction in the rights of, and in the justice that should be done to, the person applying to buy the freehold of the property.

There is then the removal of the assumption of right for security of tenure—another important issue. The 1974 formula contains the assumption that the occupying leaseholder has a right to tenancy at the end of his lease. In some cases that will happen, but in others it will not, but a legal assumption of that sort follows frequently used legal practice. It is an extremely important principle in the way in which the value of the property is assumed and arrived at. Lords amendment No. 89 will remove the assumption of security of tenure at the end of the lease. Houses will be valued in an arbitrary way, according to whether, by chance, that right is there. We believe that to be an unfair change.

The Leasehold Enfranchisement Association considers that market value as a basis for the assessing of cost of enfranchisement can be acceptable only when modified by recognition of the moral right of the occupying home owner. I hope that the Government are prepared to recognise that right, which should not be ignored. It is established by an important principle that has existed for a long time and is understood, but will be removed by the amendment.

5.45 pm

Never before in the history of leasehold enfranchisement have assessments of costs been worked out on the basis that the resident home owner has no right, moral or otherwise, to security of tenure at the end of his lease, and the resulting figures could prove impossible for most leaseholders, particularly long-term leaseholders whose lease terms are now short as a result of the years that they have been in the property.

Most larger houses were not given Rent Act protection in 1954, because they were not considered to be in short supply, but that was because many were still in various degrees of dilapidation or dereliction after the war, and conditions were still such that people had to have courage to take them on and restore them. The situation is different now, a number of years on, and that is an extremely important point.

As to the lease extension rights for house leaseholders, a 50-year extension of lease was an alternative option for qualifying leaseholders under previous legislation, but again, that right will be removed by the Bill. That was done quite openly from the beginning, as is shown by the Government's early proposals. It was hoped that an amendment would be tabled that might restore the right, and we certainly debated many of the issues. However, when taken with Lords amendment No. 89, not only will there be no improvement in the position of house-leaseholders, but their situation will be worsened.

I do not believe that that is what the Government intended to do, but as we, the Consumers Association and the Leasehold Enfranchisement Association view it, that is the reality. If the Government do not change their mind, they will have to be prepared to be told that they got it wrong. The move would be discrimination against a minority group of house leaseholders who were not previously eligible for enfranchisement, who were discriminated against in 1967 and again in 1974 by being denied rights given to other similar leaseholders.

I have always said, in good faith, that the Government's intention was to get rid of leasehold as a form of tenure. They have said both that, and that it must be done on a basis of equity and fairness rather than through seizure, which is what some Tory Back Benchers have claimed. We accept that it must be done on a fair basis. I hope that the Minister will accept our view that, no doubt inadvertently, something done in the other House is taking us backwards. We do not want that. The Government should not be asking us to agree to Lords amendments Nos. 89 and 265.

I should like to press the Minister a bit further on injurious affection and the changes to that which will result from Lords amendment No. 90. As the amendments were moved formally, we have not heard exactly why amendment No. 90 is considered necessary. The Leasehold

Enfranchisement Association is not fully convinced, although it might find the amendment acceptable if the Government stated clearly that they did not intend injurious affection to apply to urban houses.

We may, of course, be wrong in assuming that those speaking on behalf of rural interests are too inclined to talk engagingly of dower houses and long leaseholds. This, however, is almost entirely an urban problem; dower houses are not an issue. It is understood that the Government do not intend injurious affection to have any practical application to urban houses, but the agents of a major London landlord are already reported to have spoken of "crippling loadings" in respect of the first household to attempt enfranchisement.

People outside are worried about what may be done to prevent enfranchisement and extensions; they are concerned about the interpretation of certain provisions. The Minister is in the legal profession, and will know—as we all do—that skilful lawyers spend a good deal of time trying to find loopholes in legislation. I am no supporter of the Government, but I will give them the benefit of the doubt: even they may not want the legislation to be interpreted as it will be interpreted by some devious, scheming lawyers who see an opportunity to make money by protecting dukes who do not want leaseholders to have the chance of enfranchisement or extensions.

Unless the Minister can convince us that our fears are unjustified, we intend to press amendment No. 89 to a Division; if it falls, amendment No. 265 will automatically fall with it. As for amendment No. 90, I wish to hear what the Minister has to say, and, if necessary, to seek the House's permission to speak later. We are not sure what the Government intend; if we receive the assurances that we and the people seek about its interpretation, we may be prepared to let it pass. However, we are nearing the final debate on enfranchisement and extensions.

The Government are finding it difficult to convince some of their own Back Benchers of the equity of their proposals, and many Conservative Members support the Opposition's views. The Minister must do some convincing if we are not to press amendment No. 89 to a Division, because we believe that it would worsen the position of house owners.

Mr. Fishburn: The many leaseholders who live in London, and who live in houses rather than flats, feel cruelly let down by this aspect of the legislation. They do not feel let down by what was done on Second Reading, in Committee or on Third Reading; they feel let down by amendments Nos. 89 and 90, which were added in another place, without warning, despite the months—indeed, years—of debate on leasehold reform.

That debate began in a number of inner-London constituencies, under the aegis of my predecessor, Brandon Rhys Williams. The aim was precisely to enfrachise leaseholders who owned houses rather than flats. In the intervening years—quite properly—legislation has been introduced to enfranchise flat owners; that will change the face of London dramatically for the better over the next 10 years or so. It will give the right to own their flats to people who are now trapped in a second-rate form of home-ownership, with dwindling leasehold rights.

But lo and behold! Because of these amendments, those who originally crusaded for leasehold enfranchisement will be left out in the cold. The Leasehold Reform Act 1967 allowed house owners—people who owned individual houses on leasehold—to enfranchise themselves, under a formula set out in the Act. As the Bill was going through the House, at the last minute a certain number of householders were artificially excluded in a deal between the Labour Government, as they then were, and the big London landlords, as they then were and still are. Anyone whose house had a rateable value of more than £1,500 a year was artificially excluded from the legislation.

Until these amendments were agreed in another place, it was the Government's intention, and the hope of tens of thousands of Londoners who live in leasehold houses, that enfranchisement would be possible on the terms that the 1967 Act would have allowed had it not been for that artificial exclusion. Many of those Londoners are my constituents.

London as a whole was right to look forward to such a possibility: as we have seen in the past, leaseholders who enfranchise themselves and become freeholders rapidly improve their houses, bringing about new investment and improving neighbourhood amenities and architectural features. Certainly, all the houses in my constituency of Kensington whose owners have enfranchised themselves in the past 10 or 15 years have added enormously to the quality of the area, by virtue of the fact that those who live in them also own them. Now, thousands will not be able to enfranchise themselves because the rateable value of their homes is more than £1,500. That will lead to continuing urban squalor—and, I fear, growing urban squalor in my part of the world.

Amendment No. 89 effectively disfranchises those thousands of people, for two reasons. First, there is now a provision on the face of the Bill that no leaseholder in a London house should be able to expect more than half the marriage value of the property if he wishes to enfranchise. That effectively means that the cost of enfranchisement will be vastly more than it would have been under the 1967 Act. We may be talking of not a fraction, but a quantum leap of two, three or four times the actual cost.

Such a provision has never been on the face of the Bill before. We know that it was put there to buy off a well-mounted public relations campaign in another place, not because it was the Government's original intention.

My fear, to which I should like the Minister to respond, is that the lawyers who will fix at tribunals the price of houses to be enfranchised will take the amendment merely as a starting point. Instead of the marriage value not exceeding 50 per cent., leaseholders who seek to enfranchise will have to pay more than 70, 80 or 85 per cent. of the marriage value when they buy the freehold from the residual freeholder, who has already received much of the property's worth when he sold the long lease in the first place.

The second reason also stems from amendment No. 89. When the tribunal seeks to ascertain the worth of a house that a leaseholder wishes to enfranchise, it will assume that the house will be empty at the end of the lease, with no statutory tenancy and no moral right of residence. That provision, tacked on to amendment No. 89, overturns the rule of thumb, indeed the rule of law, that we have come to expect in housing in the previous generation. It does so not only as a last-minute thought but with extraordinary high-handedness.

6 pm

Taken together, these two reasons mean that thousands of Londoners with leasehold properties will not be able to take advantage of the Bill's provisions to buy their freeholds. That is a great shame, which will be keenly felt by many of my constituents. Anything that the Minister could say now to dispel the fear that tribunals will use the amendment to increase the cost to those seeking enfranchisement will be greatly welcomed.

Amendment No. 90 contains the legal jargon of injurious affection. That concept was agreed in this House rather than in another place, but it was intended to apply to country estates and, in that context, I regard it as a welcome and sensible move and exactly the type of amendment that legislation should receive as it passes through this House. It was a sharpening and an improvement, but, in the brief six weeks since the commitment was given, the lawyers have been at work. They say that they will use amendment No. 90 to ensure that the enfranchisement of houses on contiguous estates throughout London, and Kensington, will be stymied. They will claim injurious affection and state that something which was a sensible concession to country estates should apply in the heart of our capital city. Anything that the Minister can say to rebut not me but those lawyers will be greatly appreciated.

If amendments Nos. 89 and 90 are passed and if we receive none of the assurances that I seek, thousands of my constituents will feel greatly let down after a long campaign, and leaseholders of houses in central London will not be able to enfranchise.

Mr. Raynsford: The hon. Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) is right to express alarm and concern about the implications of the amendments. As my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) rightly said, they will damage the prospects of substantial numbers of leaseholders of houses who were among the few who did not benefit from the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 and who looked forward to enfranchisement on similar terms to those that applied to leaseholders under that Act.

As has been said, there was no hint in earlier debates in the House or in Committee that a proposal such as that embodied in these amendments would be incorporated in the Bill. Indeed, to my knowledge, the Government have given no justification for the introduction of these concepts, extending to the provisions of the 1967 Act the concepts of the marriage value and compensation, or injurious affection, which were devised by the Government for the rather different conditions applying to flats and which were the basis of this legislation. There is no common sense, logic or justification in applying the two concepts of marriage value and compensation, or injurious affection, to houses. The consequences of doing so will be dramatic and devastating to many leaseholders.

Let us consider the practical implications of amendment No. 90, which deals with compensation. It states that the freeholder may claim compensation for

"such amount as is reasonable"—

there is no limit; it is a wholly open-ended phrase—

"to compensate him for that loss or damage."

Such loss or damage means

"any diminution in value of any interest"—

again, an open-ended phrase—

"of the landlord in other property"—

not only in the one property but any other property—

"resulting from the acquisition of his interest in the house and premises".

The amendment goes very wide and will allow any landlord trying to frustrate the wishes of a leaseholder seeking to enfranchise to use the services of a skilful lawyer to put a major obstacle in the way of the leaseholder, as the hon. Member for Kensington said.

However, that is not the end of it. The amendment also states that loss or damage shall mean

"any other loss or damage which results therefrom to the extent that it is referable to his ownership of any interest in other property."

They are extraordinarily wide concepts, which will allow leaseholders to be confronted by lawyers demanding substantial sums in compensation, relating to various claims which may or may not be justified.

I accept that there may be consequences for landlords who are used to managing a block of flats if some properties within that block are enfranchised. There could be knock-on consequences for the management of the block, but houses are self-contained dwellings, which is an entirely different matter. They should not be subject to the curious concept of compensation.

The amendment is very broad, and the broadest of all the elements, and that which I believe will be the most damaging, at least in London, is the provision relating to the loss of development value. The Bill incorporates not only the curious concept of payment for such amount as the landlord believes is owing to him as compensation because of enfranchisement but the explicit provision that loss shall include the loss of development value. It is defined as value

"attributable to the possibility of demolishing, reconstructing, or carrying out substantial works of construction"

on the property.

One can envisage a landlord, faced with a leaseholder seeking enfranchisement, saying that, if he could develop a particular property, he could replace it with a substantially more valuable one on the same site. The amendment contains no requirement that the landlord should have obtained planning consent for such development. It is sufficient for the landlord to claim merely that he might have had an opportunity to develop a property and thereby greatly enhance its value. The hypothetical loss of development value could then be charged to the leaseholder seeking enfranchisement, thus making it impossible for the leaseholder to exercise the right of enfranchisement.

Those serious implications go the the heart of the process of enfranchisement. Ministers must be only too well aware that the amendments would make it impossible for certain leaseholders in houses to exercise their rights. Leaseholders would be confronted not only with the obstancles that we already know exist in the Bill but with a powerful financial deterrent that their landlord can exercise against them.

It seems extraordinary, given Ministers' protestations about their wish to extend enfrachisement, that, under the amendments, they are deliberately seeking to place serious obstacles in the path of those seeking enfranchisement.

I do not know what justification Ministers will advance. We may be told that it is neat and tidy to apply the same concepts to houses as those that apply to flats. That is the only respectable argument that I can think of, because I have heard no other argument in favour of those provisions.

In Committee, we argued time and again for consistency between the eligibility criteria for people seeking enfranchisement under the Bill and the eligibility criteria of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987. Time and again, Ministers told us that the circumstances were different and that the 1987 Act did not apply in the same circumstances as the proposals in the Bill and, therefore, it was not appropriate to have absolute consistency in the rules. By their own arguments in Committee, they have destroyed any possible case for introducing the two amendments, which would have such a damaging impact on leaseholders in houses.

The case against amendments Nos. 89 and 265 is overwhelming and I should be surprised if Ministers could advance any convincing arguments in their favour. I hope that they will have the decency to recognise that a serious mistake has been made in the other place and that the amendments should be negatived to ensure that leaseholders in houses are not prevented from taking the opportunities for enfranchisement that Parliament is ostensibly seeking to grant.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I am sorry to detain the House for a minute or two longer on amendments Nos. 89, 90 and 265. I had not intended to speak, but my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) and the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) made some points that should not go unanswered.

Amendments Nos. 89 and 265 deal with marriage value —when the lessor and lessee's interests are put together and the value of the whole is greater than that of the two parts. Both hon. Members should recognise what is happening in the market. At the moment, if a lessee went to his landlord, the lessor, wishing to buy his interest out, the landlord, if he were so minded, would agree, and I, as a chartered surveyor, would have no difficulty in valuing the unexpired portion of the lease. They would then negotiate the marriage value and what portion of the property should go to the lessee and what portion should go to the lessor.

6.15 pm

In the present market, almost universally, 75 per cent. or more of the marriage value goes to the lessor. As we are introducing legislation to allow the lessee, in certain prescribed circumstances, to oblige the landlord, the lessor, to allow himself to be bought out, it seems quite reasonable that should there be a minimum of 50 per cent. —after all, that is some way below what happens in the market.

Amendment No. 90 deals with injurious affection. The hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) did not have a clue what the words meant, let alone what he was speaking to, so let me try to explain. It is a universal principle of all compensation law that where somebody's property is acquired compulsorily, there should be full compensation for the injurious affection—the diminution in the landlord's remaining property. The hon. Member for Greenwich read out the provisions of the Leasehold Reform Act 1967, which do not differ from other statutory provisions on compensation. It is wholly consistent with all other property law.

Mr. Raynsford: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that there is no such concept in the 1967 Act, which has worked perfectly well and successfully for 25 years or more? An entirely alien concept is now being introduced.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: The hon. Gentleman has played into my hands. I told the hon. Member for Burnley that, had I been here in 1967, I would have argued as hard as I could to ensure that that legislation was defeated. It was a totally unfair Act.

In those circumstances, consistent with all other property legislation where the landlord's property has been diminished, the Bill should make proper provision for injurious affection. That applies particularly to rural estates and where an estate village, in unique and rare cases, has been in the ownership of the same family since Domesday. This is part of our cultural heritage.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): The hon. Gentleman says that this is part of our heritage. That may or may not be so, but is not his real concern that it is part of his wealth?

Mr. Clifton-Brown: If the hon. Gentleman is casting a personal aspersion on me, he should withdraw it. If he is casting an aspersion on landowners in general, perhaps he will make himself clear.

Mr. Straw: I was referring to both—the hon. Gentleman's landholding, the landholding of other owners and the way in which they have sought unjustifiably to influence the outcome of the Bill.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: If the hon. Member for Bolton——

Mr. Straw: Blackburn.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: If the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) is casting personal aspersions against me, I should say that I have declared an interest as a chartered surveyor and a landowner. I do not believe, however, that any of my property holdings come within the scope of the Bill. If he is casting personal aspersions against me, he should withdraw them, but if he is casting aspersions against property owners in general, I should tell him that many hundreds of thousands of property owners are lessors, some of whom have only two properties.

I know that almost all the investments of one hon. Member are in one leasehold property, which will now be enfranchised. *[Laughter.]* The hon. Member for Blackburn may laugh, but I do not understand why the Labour party wants to make legislation that inhibits privity of contract. I cannot understand why it does not want anybody who makes a free agreement to do whatever he or she wants.

Mr. Straw: Is the hon. Gentleman seriously advancing the proposition that contracts should be exclusively the domain of those who are parties to them and that the community should have no interest in their outcome, even if it affects the community?

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Of course, there will be circumstances where the community has an interest, but this is not one of them.

I have already been lured into making remarks well outside the scope of the amendments. That is not entirely and exclusively my fault. I have been led down a path of temptation that I could not resist.

It is wholly right, and consistent with other property legislation, that where a property owner's interest is acquired, as it were, compulsorily, he should be compensated for the full diminution in the value of his property.

[Mr. Clifton-Brown]

Does the hon. Member for Greenwich think that it would be right for a landlord with potential investment value to have his property acquired compulsorily and get nothing from the potential investment? If that is what he is saying, it is totally unfair.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): My constituency contains a large number of leasehold properties, including some parts of the Dulwich college estate. I have fought all my parliamentary life for better rights for leaseholders, and I was proud to be associated with the Leasehold Reform Act 1967. Of course, that Act was opposed by the then Conservative Opposition, and was described by John Boyd-Carpenter as "Rachmanism in reverse." The spirit of Boyd-Carpenter lives on on the Government Benches.

The hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) argues that we shall be messing with privity of contract. But one of the reasons why Parliament exists is to disturb, in the interests of justice and fairness, arrangements between one party and another which, very often, have resulted from unequal bargaining power. It is perfectly proper for Parliament to intervene to give security of tenure—that is interfering with privity of contract.

No business man or woman on the Government Benches protests against the interference with privity of contract when the security of business people is involved. They protest only when residential tenants—usually those at the bottom of the scale—are involved. There is every reason why hon. Members should try to interfere with privity of contract. That is the intention of those on the Opposition Front Bench.

I now turn to marriage value. When the 1967 Act was introduced, it was not thought that marriage value would enter into it; the price paid by the tenant would be the price on the open market. Let us transfer the principle of marriage value to the example of a severely ill person going to a chemist to have a prescription dispensed. The transferred principle would mean that the chemist would charge the sick person a greater amount of money because he was in greater need of the prescription than someone else in the marketplace. The same principle would apply to a private doctor charging a higher fee to someone who was seriously ill and needed to be seen than to other patients. It would mean charging more for a meal to someone who was starving than to other people. That is marriage value.

The reason for leasehold reform legislation was to deal with the exploitation of tenants, usually people whose home—their most important possession—was dependent on the absence of their rights under leasehold law. That is why there was interference on these matters, and why the 1967 Act assumed that there was no such thing as marriage value.

Marriage value is demanding with menaces—I am told I must not use the word "blackmail" any longer, as it is politically incorrect—from people who are in the greatest need. That is why marriage values should not apply either to houses or to flats. I can see that there is a problem with regard to flats when a few people extend the leases and there is not general enfranchisement. There is a trade-off in those circumstances.

The amendments make things much worse by placing the matter compulsorily on the agenda for negotiation by saying that the tenant may not have more than half the value. That seems to be influencing the negotiations in a way that was not intended either by those who have campaigned for the legislation or by the Government when they introduced the Bill in the first place.

I wish to talk briefly about injurious affection, which is a principle acknowledged in compensation law. I believe that landlords are now behaving in a way that was not thought to be normal behaviour for landlords some years ago. I have been surprised at the behaviour of Dulwich college—a charity—over the past few years. The college used to behave in a benign and neighbourly way. There was a sort of give and take, and the college seemed to take a charitable view of the needs of leaseholders. In the past few years, the attitude has changed in the same way as it has with institutional landlords.

In some cases, those landlords demand the very last penny that they can get out of their tenants, whether they are business or residential. There is row after row of empty shops and premises in and around my constituency because of the high rents now being demanded by Dulwich college. If I take what I can see around my constituency as an indicator of how the college would use injurious affection, I can only conclude that it will be a very injurious affection, not for the college but for those who seek to exercise the rights given by Parliament.

I am deeply disturbed by and unhappy with the amendments. They were not intended in the first place by the Government and they entrench—particularly with regard to marriage value—the principle of being able to demand more from those who are in need than from those trading in the normal marketplace. I hope that, even at such a late hour, the Government will change their minds.

Mr. Baldry: I hope that I can reassure the House. When moving the motion, I did not appreciate that the amendment had provoked such passion outside the House. If that had been made clear to me, I would have explained the amendments in greater detail, because a number of comments that we have heard have been somewhat wide of the mark. The hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) has said that the Opposition intend to press for a Division, and I suspect that very little of what I am to say will deter them from that intention.

I shall try to explain what the matter is about. First, the amendments specify that a landlord should receive at least half of any marriage value. I accept the assertion by the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) that marriage values were not in the 1967 Act. The legislation on houses was different, because high-value houses were excluded from the 1967 Act and are included in this legislation for the first time. That is why, in part, we have marriage values, and they were debated at length in Standing Committee. The Government take the view that it is fair that the marriage value should be shared. If other hon. Members do not consider it fair, of course they will vote accordingly. We believe that it is fair, and it will normally be applied equally between parties. This floor is a useful safeguard where there may not be a willing seller.

Mr. Raynsford: The Minister conceded that the concept of marriage value was not regarded as appropriate in the 1967 Act. The distinction that he drew was between the provisions in the 1967 Act and the current extension to high-value properties. Will he tell the House what the logic is for having marriage value applying to high-value houses but not to low-value houses?

Mr. Baldry: There are two changes in the proposals —first, relating to flats and, secondly, relating to high-value houses. In those circumstances, time has moved on and it would be fair and equitable for marriage value to apply to high-value houses and to flats. The background to the 1967 Act was somewhat different from the background to the current proposals. Another difference between the Bill and the 1967 Act in the current proposals is embodied in the amendment relating to compensation for the severance price. The House has heard some fairly extreme examples of what might happen.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) should recall that the then Secretary of State for the Environment announced on Report that severance would be available for newly enfranchised houses. My hon. Friend will recall that that was because of a number of Back-Bench concerns about valuation.

The amendment arises because there are circumstances in which a real loss in the value of property remaining in a landlord's ownership may occur because of the disposal by enfranchisement. Again, we are dealing with high-value houses. The situation is unlikely to occur with low-value houses. Severance was not provided for in the 1967 Act and was unlikely to be appropriate for low-value houses. The impact of the loss on higher-value houses on a whole estate might be significant. The hon. Member for Burnley gave the good example of a dower house on a country estate, where an island of property under different ownership might be created.

The concerns that that rule somehow might apply in urban situations and that landlords might use that as preventing enfranchisement are somewhat wide of the mark. First, the landlord must satisfy a leasehold valuation tribunal that there is a real loss to some other property in his ownership. A landlord cannot simply add a penalty. He will have to show that some other third party would actually pay less for the other property, separately, than for the combined property. That seems to be only fair and equitable.

The hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) cannot have it both ways. If he argues that there is no loss to the landlord, the amendment does no harm. However, if there are cases where there may be a loss to the landlord, it is only right that there should be compensation and that the landlord should have the opportunity of arguing the point before a leasehold valuation tribunal.

6.30 pm

Amendment No. 265 disapplies the assumption that tenants will have security of tenure at the end of their leases. Tenants of higher-value houses, which will now be able to be enfranchised, do not normally have security of tenure. Indeed, the assumption, if that were allowed to continue, would artificially decrease the value of the landlord's interest. Where the tenant has the right, amendment No. 265 will not affect the valuation. The amendment simply reflects the truth. The facts speak for themselves. I cannot see how one can object to a situation where the facts speak for themselves. We are fairly reflecting the truth of the situation.

Mr. Pike: As a result of amendments Nos. 89 and 265, will not the householder enjoy a worse position?

Mr. Baldry: Parts of this afternoon's debate have tended, on both sides of the House, to become a spat, or a scoreboard with tenants on one side and landlords on the other. That is not how we on the Treasury Bench view the Bill. We want legislation that is fair and equitable to all parties in all regards. I believe that amendments Nos. 89, 90 and 265 are useful to ensure that the valuation of newly enfranchisable houses is equitable and in line with that for flats. For those reasons, I commend the amendments to the House.

Mr. Battle: The Minister has revealed a further example of the Government effectively caving in to the pressure of the landlord's interests which was placed on the Government in another place. That is what it boils down to.

I remind the Minister of one letter of the many that I have received which was addressed to the Minister. It states:

"I understand that the above mentioned bill will go next Monday back to the House of Commons.

I strongly hope that the Government will reject in the House of Commons the amendments No. 89 and 90 proposed by the House of Lords in particular;

a) injurious affection (loss which might be incurred to a landlord other property by enfranchisement of a particular house)

b) removal of the assumption of right to security of tenure

c) apportion of marriage value

All these amendments have been clearly proposed in the House of Lords for the exclusive benefit of the Landlords with the effect of making the enfranchisement process for houses extremely expensive.

Already the 1974 formula which should apply, as in the Government manifesto, gives the landlord a very high compensation, adding these further 3 new factors would be punitive for the tenant and against the entire scope of the legislation.

I was born in my present home and have lived there all my life and therefore very much hope that you will not adopt these three final amendments."

I believe that that person speaks for many people who expect to get leasehold enfranchisement, but who now realise that, with the Government's acceptance of amendments Nos. 89 and 90, that will not happen.

When Conservative Members push the Government even further by appealing to what we might describe as their version of the inviolability of the private contract, I submit to them, as many of my hon. Friends pointed out during the debate, that long lease contracts were never fair contracts because of the unreasonable assumption that the property "sold" or provided by the leaseholder would be handed back again for nothing, in perfect condition, at the end of the lease.

The lease periods concerned, sometimes 999 years, are also too long to be undertaken without a reasonable possibility of statutory change during that period. It is also possible for landlords to exact unfair contracts because of the local housing monopolies that they control. In other words, there was never any true freedom of choice for people entering such contracts if they wanted to live in a particular place. There is an inequality of bargaining power. In the leasehold area, private individuals seeking to buy a home via what is known as arm's-length negotiations are up against a scale of resources, both financial and professional, which makes any suggestion that it is an equal contract absolutely laughable.

Long-lease contracts were never fair. Unnatural property price inflation has escalated that imbalance. I suggest that landlords might have put their own house in order. However, they have not chosen to do that, and that is precisely why there is a demand for this legislation.

[Mr. Battle]

I refer the hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) to an article in *The Times* on 10 March 1993. In an editorial headed

"Leasehold reform should not be opposed by Conservatives",

the article stated:

"For Tories who believe in the sanctity of private contracts, therefore, the measure"—

the leasehold reform in the Bill—

"is a crypto-socialist attack on Locke's most sacred principles and an affront to the rule of law.

Appealing to these arguments may be to the defenders of the free market, the lordly rebels are being intransigent in their principled resistance. In practice, no society can afford to treat private contracts of private property as absolutely inviolable. In markets in which ownership is highly concentrated, governments rightly interfere with the untrammelled enjoyment of private property in the name of competition. Land ownership in central London has been a case of monopoly power, especially during the mid-Victorian period when Britain's system of long leasehold tenure became the norm.

For better or worse, the principle of forcing freeholders to sell their property to long leaseholders was established, by the 1967 Leasehold Reform Act. That law excluded flats, but only for reasons of administrative complexity. the new bill merely removes that anomaly. Parliament must ensure that the compensatory mechanism which accompanies it is just and carefully regulated."

With respect to the amendments, the Government are asking house lessees to pay the price and they are stepping back. In other words, the Government accept the need to tackle the anomaly in relation to flats, but they will do that at the expense of people with long leases on their houses. That is an unacceptable watering down of the Bill. In effect, the increasing cost of enfranchisement in relation to houses would be such that it could no longer be said that effective enfranchisement rights were being offered.

The three additional valuation factors to which we have referred in the debate—injurious affection, the removal of the assumption of the right to security of tenure and the apportionment of marriage values—which have been loaded on to what house leaseholders will be made to pay on enfranchisement, seem to be grossly discriminatory. Householders, who were effectively excluded from the provisions of the Leasehold Reform Act 1967, are now being discriminated against in the Bill.

It seems that the Bill has been retitled the "Leasehold Reform" Bill, but the effect of that has been to cover up the removal of enfranchisement rights. In practice, we have a weaker, shabby Bill that will not deliver to leaseholders the rights to which they think that they will be entitled. The way forward for the Government is not to accept the Lords amendments. In the long run, the way forward would be to accept our proposals on commonhold. I look forward to those proposals coming before the House. They are the real way forward, but I am worried that that might not be on the agenda.

In the other place, Lord Strathclyde, speaking for the Government, said:

"my noble and learned friend the Lord Chancellor may or may not introduce that system in the future because it is fiendishly complicated and may require more thought."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 15 March 1993, Vol. 543, c. 1264.]

The Government have had plenty of time to bring forward a commonhold Bill. That would have cut through much of the morass into which the Government have dug themselves with the present proposals.

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:-

The House divided: Ayes 262, Noes 181.

Division No. 295] **[8.40 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan

Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Mariand, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Andrew MacKay.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyce, Jimmy
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McLeish, Henry
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Miller, Andrew
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Rowlands, Ted
Salmond, Alex
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Meale and
Mr. Gordon McMaster.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 89 agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 90 and 91 agreed to.

New clause

PROPERTY TRANSFERRED FOR PUBLIC BENEFIT ETC.

Lords amendment proposed: No. 92, after clause 62 insert the following new clause—

("After section 32 of the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 there shall be inserted—

32A.—(1) A notice of a person's desire to have the freehold of a house and premises under this Part shall be of no effect if at the relevant time the whole or any part of the the house and premises is qualifying property and either—

(a) the tenancy was created after the commencement of Chapter III of Part I of the Housing and Urban Development Act 1993; or

(b) (where the tenancy was created before that commencement) the tenant would not be entitled to have the freehold if either or both of sections 1A and 1B above were not in force.

(2) For the purposes of this section the whole or any part of the house and premises is qualifying property if—

(a) it has been designated under section 31(1)(b), (c) or (d) of the Inheritance Tax Act 1984 (designation and undertakings relating to conditionally exempt transfers), whether with or without any other property, and no chargeable event has subsequently occurred with respect to it; or

(b) an application to the Board for it to be so designated is pending; or

(c) it is the property of a body not established or conducted for profit and a direction has been given in relation to it under section 26 of that Act (gifts for public benefit), whether with or without any other property; or

(d) an application to the Board for a direction to be so given in relation to it is pending.

(3) For the purposes of subsection (2) above an application is pending as from the time when it is made to the Board until such time as it is either granted or refused by the Board or withdrawn by the applicant; and for this purpose an application shall not be regarded as made unless and until the applicant has submitted to the Board all such information in support of the application as is required by the Board.

(4) A notice of a person's desire to have the freehold of a house and premises under this Part shall cease to have effect if—

(a) before completion of the conveyance in pursuance of the tenant's notice, the whole or any part of the house and premises becomes qualifying property; and

(b) the condition set out in subsection (1)(a) or (as the case may be) subsection (1)(b) above is satisfied.

(5) Where a tenant's notice ceases to have effect by virtue of subsection (4) above—

(a) section 9(4) above shall not apply to require the tenant to make any payment to the landlord in respect of costs incurred by reason of the notice; and

(b) the person who applied or is applying for designation or a direction shall be liable to the tenant for all reasonable costs incurred by the tenant in connection with his claim to acquire the freehold of the house and premises.

(6) Where it is claimed that subsection (1) or (4) above applies in relation to a tenant's notice, the person making the claim shall, at the time of making it, furnish the tenant with evidence in support of it; and if he fails to do so he shall be liable for any costs which are reasonably incurred by the tenant in consequence of the failure.

(7) In subsection (2) above as it has effect for the purposes of subsection (1) above—

(a) paragraphs (a) and (b) apply to designation under section 34(1)(a), (b) or (c) of the Finance Act 1975 or section 77(1)(b), (c) or (d) of the Finance Act 1976 as they apply to designation under section 31(1)(b), (c) or (d) of the Inheritance Tax Act 1984; and

(b) paragraphs (c) and (d) apply to a direction under paragraph 13 of Schedule 6 to the Finance Act 1975 as they apply to a direction under section 26 of that Act of 1984.

(8) In this section—

"the Board" means the Commissioners of Inland Revenue;

"chargeable event" means—

(a) any event which in accordance with any provision of Chapter II of Part II of the Inheritance Tax Act 1984 (exempt transfers) is a chargeable event, including any such provision as applied by section 78(3) of that Act (conditionally exempt occasions); or

(b) any event which would have been a chargeable event in the circumstances mentioned in section 79(3) of that Act (exemption from ten-yearly charge).")

Read a Second time.

Amendment made to the Lords amendment: (a), in subsection (7) leave out

'as it has effect for the purposes of subsection (1) above'.—*[Mr. Baldry.]*

Lords amendment, as amended, agreed to.

Lords amendments, Nos. 93 to 152 agreed to.

New clause

PROPERTY WITHIN CATHEDRAL BOUNDARY

Lords amendment proposed: No. 153, after clause 85 insert the following new clause—

(". There shall be no right under Chapter I or II to acquire any interest in or lease of any property which lies within the precinct boundary of a cathedral church, within the meaning of the Cathedrals Measure 1963.")

Read a Second time.

Amendment made to Lords amendment: (a), leave out from 'which' to end and insert

'for the purposes of the Care of Cathedrals Measure 1990 is within the precinct of a cathedral church.'.—*[Mr. Baldry.]*

Lords amendment, as amended, ageed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 154 to 169 agreed to.

New clause

RIGHT TO INFORMATION

Lords amendment: No. 170, after clause 110 insert the following new clause—

(". After subsection (2) of section 104 of the 1985 Act (provision of information about tenancies) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(3) A local authority which is the landlord under a secure tenancy shall supply the tenant, at least once in every relevant year, with a copy of such information relating to the provisions mentioned in subsection (1)(b) and (c) as was last published by it; and in this subsection 'relevant year' means any period of twelve months beginning with an anniversary of the date of such publication."")

Read a Second time.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Sir George Young.]*

7 pm

Mr. Battle: The amendment deals with the right to information. It concerns, in particular, the public sector and the Government's intentions in providing such information.

The proposed new subsection refers to section 104 of the Housing Act 1985, which deals with the provision of information about a tenancy. Does that mean that that information will simply be limited to the right to buy, or will it include information about the Government's proposed rents-to-mortgage scheme, which also forms part of the Bill? The relevant section of the 1985 Act

provides that when a tenancy is created, a local authority should give tenants information about changes to the tenancy. I hope that the information provided under the proposed subsection is not just confined to that about right to buy, but includes information about the Government's rents-to-mortgage scheme.

The Government have tried recently to boost the flagging right-to-buy programme by publishing another booklet that, set out that programme in fine detail. I understand that, this year, the Government have already spent £1·4 million on publicity. The latest publicity stunt will not help council leaseholders who exercised the right to buy but were not properly informed at the time of how they would have to manage and pay the lease. I remind the Minister that some 70,000 council leaseholders in London alone face massive repair bills. They are unable to sell their flats and now feel that they were not properly informed by the Government when they pushed the right-to-buy programme.

Ministers' energies would be better spent tackling the huge need for homes to rent rather than simply trying to create a demand where one virtually does not exist.

It might be helpful if, under the terms of right to information, Ministers gave an undertaking to the House that the relevant costs of providing such information would be fully met and that the provisions would be reviewed if, in the future, authorities could prove that meeting them was more onerous than the Government expected.

Many believe that the rents-to-mortgage scheme is not relevant to current circumstances. In Committee, the Minister often quoted me as saying that the scheme was irrelevant. I cannot claim ownership of that description; it should be claimed by Mr. Steve Wilcox, who wrote in *Roof* magazine in the September-October 1992 edition that the scheme

"will appeal to a limited number of tenants who cannot afford right to buy but are not in receipt of housing benefit."

In other words, the proposals for rents to mortgages, announced in July and based on pilot schemes in Scotland, new town Basildon and Milton Keynes, have not achieved anything near what the Government suggested. There is no real market for the scheme because rents are already at levels where many tenants could, if they so wished, buy under the right-to-buy scheme, with mortgage repayments no higher than their current rents. The scheme is still being sold by the Government, however, as a means of avoiding "future rent increases".

All that the rents-to-mortgage scheme will do is highlight the financial squeeze on local authorities by claiming projected large increases as if they were an inevitable consequence of continued council ownership. It will not spell out the lack of resources to invest in the necessary repair and improvement of local authority stock.

Inside Housing magazine of 30 October 1992 described the scheme in an article entitled, "Rents to mortgage too obscure", which stateds:

"Difficulty in understanding rent to mortgage has been one of the main reasons for tenants not taking up the scheme, the Scottish Office has conceded."

That was conceded in the Scottish Office publication, "The Rent to Mortgage Scheme in Scotland". The article continued:

"An official report into local authority and Scottish Homes rent to mortgage pilots claims success for the scheme . . . in attracting purchasers who otherwise would not have been able to purchase their homes.

But the report says the main reasons why tenants did not continue with a rent to mortgage purchase after expressing interest included fear of unemployment and difficulty understanding the scheme."

I can understand why people's fear of unemployment makes them unwilling to be pushed any further to purchase property.

Perhaps provocatively—although this is an expression that has been echoed by most people with experience and knowledge in the housing field—I have to say that in 69 per cent. of the housing stock in Britain, owner-occupation is proving untenable. Twenty-one per cent. of the stock is still with local authorities. The private rented sector still stagnates, despite the Government's efforts to revivify it, at 7 per cent. Housing associations, of which the Government demand so much, represent a mere 3 per cent. of the housing stock.

I put it to the Minister that housing associations, with only 3 per cent. of the stock, can go hardly any way towards meeting the needs of people for housing to rent. The Institute of Housing suggests that there need to be 100,000 new dwellings a year provided in Britain. The Government are providing 53,000 dwellings at best—that is just over half, and the figure is projected to go down next year, and down again the following year.

When it comes to providing information, why are the Government obsessed by a single track? Why do they not recognise people's need to rent? The Minister claims to speak of rights. Why could he not recognise the right to rent, and include that in the information to which this clause and the amendment refer?

I suggest, as we did in the Standing Committee on the Bill, that, instead of a rents-to-mortgage scheme, what is most needed in the present context is a scheme that takes people from mortgages to rents. That way perhaps we would not be in the ludicrous position whereby people faced with repossession lose their home and may go into a hostel or other housing accommodation. Then along comes a housing association with a housing market package, buys the property and suggests to the local authority that it can put a homeless person into it.

The difficulty is that people might not get back into the home which belonged to them and which they built up. Why not leave the family in their home and convert their mortgage into rent? That could be done with a bit of arithmetic, and would make far more sense than the Government's proposals for turning rent into mortgages.

There are great difficulties in understanding the rents-to-mortgage scheme. I will not take the House through them now, but the arithmetic and the exclusion of people on housing benefit—to mention but two points—mean that the scheme is not only little understood but creates real dangers. Private lenders have first charge on the property and, if those low-income owners fall behind on what will then be described as their rent—that is, their mortgage—they will find that the property can be repossessed. That ought to be spelt out plainly in the information to tenants.

I suggest to the Minister that, in the booklets or information passed back to tenants, he should spell out that shared ownership, which the rents-to-mortgage scheme is effectively now to replace, offered tenants a better and a more secure deal.

[Mr. Battle]

The Institute of Housing, in its response to the Department of the Environment consultation paper on the rents-to-mortgage scheme said that it was the wrong scheme at the wrong time, that it was ill conceived and inappropriate, and that the eventual take-up would be minimal. We concur with that view and urge the Government, when it gives information to tenants, not to keep pressing its single-tenure obsession. We need flexible tenure in Britain so that people can move within their lifetimes from renting to owning and back to renting, perhaps part-sharing or part-owning. They should not be locked into a form of tenure. Over the past 14 years, by pushing owner-occupation, the Government have developed, not a two-way flow and a flexible tenure, but a one-way street to owner-occupation, which is proving to be a cul-de-sac of repossession for far too many people.

I suggest that, as we set out in our document only last Friday, flexible tenure is what is needed in Britain, not a lock-in to owner-occupation. If the Government were to give tenants fair information on their real rights, they would include the right to rent, set out all the options, and, as it were, open up flexibility of tenures in Britain. They should not continue—as I believe that the Minister does not really want to, because he does occasionally make comments to the effect that we need to develop the rented sector as well—on the present course, in which the system is clogged up and homes are empty while people are homeless.

7.15 pm

Sir George Young: I will begin by answering a question that the hon. Gentleman posed at the outset of his speech.

Yes, the amendment will require local authority landlords to reissue annually the information, not just about the right to buy, but about other statutory rights. Local authority tenants already have the right to rent; they are secure tenants, and when they take out a lease from their local authority their rights are set out quite clearly.

The hon. Gentleman touched on two groups of people, the first being leaseholders in high-rise flats, who sometimes find it difficult to sell because the incoming purchaser finds it difficult to get a mortgage.

My hon. Friend and I are continuing to have discussions with the Council of Mortgage Lenders to see whether we can find a way through this problem, which, although not widespread, is a real problem for the people concerned.

Mr. Battle: I am grateful for the Minister's response on that point. It is the response which he gave us some five months ago. I appreciate that he is meeting the Council of Mortgage Lenders, but can he assure me that he is also meeting local authorities, many of whom feel that, at the end of the day, it will be up to them, particularly in tower blocks, to take back the properties and turn people's mortgages into rent, in order to solve that problem?

Sir George Young: The answer is yes, because the local authorities are the freeholders of these blocks of flats and have an interest in any difficulties that may face the leaseholders living in them. Those discussions are continuing.

The bulk of the hon. Gentleman's remarks were about the rent-to-mortgage scheme. Once again, we saw the hon. Gentleman sitting very firmly on the fence. He does not want to condemn the rent-to-mortgage scheme in case it turns out to be a wild success, like the right-to-buy scheme, but he finds it impossible to endorse it. I find that slightly strange, because only last week the Labour party put out a document entitled "Labour's charter for flexible tenure", and one of the things it says is:

"We want to see the end to the old division between rented and owner-occupied housing. There should be circumstances where people can change tenure without having to change their home."

That is exactly what the rent-to-mortgage scheme ensures. I cannot understand why someone who is in favour of flexibility of tenure finds it impossible to endorse the rent-to-mortgage scheme.

The hon. Gentleman knows that we have made no forecasts of the take-up of this scheme. We are in the business of extending choice and opportunity to local authority tenants. It is then up to them to decide whether they want to take the opportunity that we have made available to them under the rent-to-mortgage scheme.

I take it from what the hon. Gentleman says that he has no particular objection to amendment No. 170, which simply requires local authorities to set out annually to tenants their statutory rights, so I hope that the House can now approve the amendment.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments 171 to 173 agreed to.

Clause 113

PROVISION OF HOUSING WELFARE SERVICES

Lords amendment: No. 174, in page 115, line 44, at end insert—

("(4) The powers conferred by this section shall not be regarded as restricting those conferred by section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 (powers to incur expenditure for purposes not authorised by any other enactment) and accordingly the reference to any other enactment in subsection (1)(a) of that section shall not include a reference to this section.")

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Sir George Young.]*

Ms Ann Coffey (Stockport): The Minister will remember the discussion in Committee about the effect of immediate transfer of the cost of warden services from the housing revenue account to the general fund, and the effect that that might have on the provision of those services.

I want to explore further some of the difficulties of the original clause by reference to the situation in my constituency.

Stockport provides a warden care call service to its tenants which is currently being converted to a speech-based telephone system. That scheme is provided to 1,783 council tenants, of whom 1,341 live in group schemes—special accommodation for the elderly. Wardens monitor and respond to calls and visits. All tenants are visited weekly and 15 per cent. of tenants are visited daily. This year there is a demand for a further 12 schemes for a total of 218 elderly people. The number of elderly people is increasing, and they often live alone—the care call offers them safety and peace of mind. Demand for the care call service is likely to increase.

At present, the cost of warden services is mainly provided through the housing revenue account. There are

differentials in rent multipliers because the accommodation with access to the care call warden system is special accommodation, but the differentials do not fully reflect the cost of the provision. It seems that, from 1 April 1994, the Government intend to transfer from the housing revenue account to the general fund the cost of essential care services managed by the housing wardens. The definition of essential care is assistance with personal care, feeding, dressing and getting up. In Stockport that is unlikely to be a significant cost of the housing wardens service.

What is not clear at present is what, when or whether the Department of the Environment may issue regulations that would effectively lead local authorities to meet the cost of warden and care alarm services, which are not defined as essential care, through a service charge with the rent. The question is whether such a service charge would be eligible for housing benefit.

In general, the charge will qualify for housing benefit only if it is an essential requirement of the accommodation. If some degree of choice for tenants is involved, that service charge may not be eligible for housing benefit. If it is not, it will mean that the cost of the warden service will transfer to the general fund because certain tenants, including the elderly and frail, will not be able to afford the service charge. Clearly the authority will have to provide that service. If it cannot do so through the housing revenue account and tenants have no access to housing benefit, the cost will have to be provided through the general fund.

The issue caused me much concern because, as the Minister must realise, social services departments are under extreme pressure to cut their budgets in the forthcoming year. I would be concerned if, either directly or indirectly, the cost of those services was transferred to the general fund. That might well result in the dimunition of the provision of the present service to elderly people at a time when there is a growing elderly population, we are seeking to keep more people in the community and a crucial part of community care is the accommodation that those people are offered.

I appreciate that there is a long-standing argument about what constitutes housing welfare and what degree of responsibility a housing authority has to provide welfare to its tenants. The housing authority is not responsible merely for the maintenance of bricks and mortar—it must take into account the welfare needs of its tenants. Rightly or wrongly, over the years the welfare housing needs of elderly people have been met in countless authorities through care call warden services provided from the housing revenue account. Any sudden shift in responsibility for that provision would have disastrous consequences for the provision of care call and warden services to the elderly.

When he considers the amendment—resulting provisions will be provided through regulations—I hope that the Minister will carefully consider the position of elderly tenants and social services departments. I hope that he will introduce regulations to transfer the cost over a period so that it is affordable for both the housing and the social services departments. He must also ensure that elderly people continue to receive the same level of provision as they have in the past. That provision is crucial for them and in great demand by them.

Sir George Young: I can give the hon. Member for Stockport (Ms. Coffey) the assurance that she sought: there is no question of there being a sudden shift in responsibility for those services. We are talking about a vulnerable group of people and important services. There will be no turbulence in the continued delivery of those services.

Following the Ealing judgment, there was some doubt about whether local authorities had the powers, through the housing account, to pay for services. Clause 113 validates the status quo and gives local housing authorities the power to provide welfare services for their tenants. The amendment is merely a tidying amendment to ensure that the authorities can go on providing certain services for the private sector.

The Government have been consulting and have received more than 200 representations. We are currently considering the outcome of that exercise. As the hon. Lady implied, the subject is complicated. It is not merely a question of deciding what constitutes a housing service and what constitutes a welfare service; it also involves the knock-on effect on housing benefit.

The Government are not minded to take dramatic action, for the reasons outlined by the hon. Lady. A number of options are available to us. One option would be to wait until local Government responsibilities are reorganised and we move to unitary authorities. We could take that opportunity to clarify the division of responsibilities between housing services and social services.

There should be no disruption to services to tenants. That principle will inspire us as we resolve the matter. I hope that the hon. Lady will accept my assurance.

Question put and agreed to.—[Special entry.]

Clause 116

MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS

Lords amendment: No. 175, in page 116, line 39, leave out from beginning to ("there") in line 40 and insert

("At the end of subsection (3) of section 27 of the 1985 Act (management agreements), there shall be inserted the words "and shall contain such provisions as may be prescribed by regulations made by the Secretary of State".

(1A) For subsection (5) of that section")

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Sir George Young.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendments Nos. 182 and 183.

Mr. Straw: These amendments and amendment No. 181 involve compulsory competitive tendering for housing management. Therefore, it may be for the convenience of the House if I address my remarks to both groups of amendments. I hope that the Minister agrees. I congratulate him on his elevation to Her Majesty's Privy Council.

One of the major contentions between the Opposition and the Government when the issue was discussed earlier was the fact that the Government proposed to enforce compulsory competitive tendering for housing management and to remove the tenants' right of veto which they possessed under section 27 of the Housing Act 1985. Under that Act, they had the power to veto a change in the

[Mr. Straw]

management of their housing. The matter was considered at great length in Committee, in the House and in their Lordships' House.

With one exception—which is dealt with by Lords amendment No. 181—the Government stuck to their original position. They went through the rigmarole of explaining why a tenant's right of veto was no longer necessary and why, if it was necessary, the tenant's veto would be dealt with through other means. The Government did not offer much clarity over whether they wanted the veto or not.

The Government first claimed—as Lord Strathclyde did in another place—that the veto was unnecessary because there was no proposal to change the landlord's or the tenant's basic rights under compulsory competitive tendering for housing, whereas there would be proposals to do so in the parallel cases involving housing action trusts or large-scale voluntary transfers.

Our view, which I believe was widely shared in the other place, was that, in practice, a competitive tendering process that led to the management of housing responsibilities being transferred to a private company involved at least as substantial a transfer as a large-scale voluntary transfer—which usually results in transferring responsibility for housing management to the same people as before. In a sense, it is in practice a larger transfer than that which is occasioned under a housing action trust, where tenants now have the right to go back to the local authority at the end of the period.

Having dealt with that point, Ministers in another place argued that the veto was unnecessary, as tenants were being given better rights to consultation and involvement. I am always very suspicious of such arguments. I am always suspicious when a categorical right is removed, when one hears weasel words from Ministers—even words as elegant as those that dropped from the lips of the now right hon. Gentleman. Ministers may admit that a specific right is indeed being taken away but say that anyone going through the small print will see that tenants may be consulted. The truth is that tenants will no longer have the clear veto right that they enjoy under the current law. We believe that that right should be continued.

We believe that the determination to remove tenants' veto rights in respect of housing management—rights that are enjoyed in respect of compulsory competitive tendering and large-scale voluntary transfers—springs from the fact that the Government attach much more importance to the privatisation of public services than to the protection of tenants' rights.

In these debates we have tried to flush out the rights to which Ministers give priority. Do the Government regard as more important the right of tenants to a say in the running of their estate or the right of private firms bidding for the management of local authority housing stock? If there is a conflict, does profit come far above the rights of tenants? I am not suggesting that this is necessarily the Minister's own view. Indeed, it is likely that, if he were in control of Government policy, he would have scarcely nothing to do with privatisation and the rest of the now-rotting Thatcherite agenda, to which he is tied. In fact, we saw his attitude when the lady was still in office. As a Minister, however, he has to support pernicious nonsense of this type.

7.30 pm

Lords amendment No. 181 deals with management agreements and compulsory competitive tendering. The Government's concession is that the new clause imports into the Bill the provisions of section 27A of the Housing Act 1985, which previously had been removed altogether. At first glance, this is certainly progress and represents Ministers' recognition of the force of our argument. However, we still have very considerable anxiety about the operation of this provision, and I hope that he will be able to put our minds at rest.

Our first anxiety concerns the breadth of the power being given to the Secretary of State under what will be section 27A(2) of the 1985 Act, which might be described as a Henry VIII provision. Subsection (2) provides:

> "The Secretary of State may by regulations provide that . . . the provisions of section 27A shall have effect with such modifications as appear to the Secretary of State to be necessary or expedient."

The Secretary of State is being given power to use subordinate legislation as a means of modifying a provision of an Act. Both Houses of Parliament have always been extremely reluctant to give a Secretary of State power to amend primary legislation by edict unless the circumstances are very clear.

Some hon. Members will remember the debates on the provision that started out as clause 222—but ended up as something different—of the Education Reform Bill of 1988. In that case, the Secretary of State was given power to amend employment legislation very widely by regulation and without further notice to the House. In what respect is it intended that section 27A of the 1985 Act shall be modified? It is important that hon. Members know what is being talked about when they are invited to accede to Lords amendment No. 181.

The second issue concerns the extent of management agreements and the application of section 27A to compulsory competitive tendering. My understanding of the proposed section 27AA is that the tenant's right of veto will operate in respect of management agreements. It seems to me that, where there is a voluntary arrangement for the management of a local authority's housing stock, it will be subject to a tenant's veto. Perhaps the Minister will be able to clarify something about which I am not clear. If there is a compulsory arrangement, will section 27A apply? In this context, I hope that the Minister will be able to define "management agreement" and say whether such an agreement includes the notion of a service agreement.

The right hon. Gentleman will know that there has been some argument about this matter. My understanding is that Rutland and Brent have sought to evade the more stringent procedural requirements by defining as service agreements those that amount to management agreements. That practice is unacceptable to us, and I hope that it is unacceptable to the Minister. If, under Lords amendment No. 181, tenants are being given a right that some local authorities are able, with malign intent, to evade by means of such redefinition of agreements for the purposes of the veto, that will defeat the object and frustrate Government policy by the back door.

I may want, with the permission of the Chair and the leave of the House, to return to this issue after the Minister's reply.

Sir George Young: The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) has raised a number of issues—the tenant's

veto, compulsory competitive tendering for housing management, and some technical matters relating to Lords amendment No. 181. He drew on an article in the 21 May issue of *Inside Housing*.

Mr. Straw: No.

Sir George Young: That was certainly the source, although the hon. Gentleman did not refer specifically to it.

The tenants' veto was a matter that we spent some time discussing in Committee. I do not thing that this issue has exactly set the country alight since January. Tenants now have a deeper understanding of what the Government plan to do. The veto question concerns the removal by the Bill of the requirement on the Secretary of State to withhold his approval of a housing management delegation if it appears to him that a majority of tenants in the area to which the agreement relates do not want to proceed with it. We must keep in mind the new environment in which housing management agreements are now being sought. Full consultation with tenants will be standard; tenants are increasingly involved, often seeking to manage their own homes. Local authorities are also actively looking for new ways to deliver services and looking to the private sector to help them with that.

All these developments are good for housing management and, above all, for tenants, many of whom enjoy the benefits of improved and more cost-effective services. In addition, there will be housing management compulsory competitive tendering, which is, in effect, being introduced under the Local Government Act 1988. When a local authority intends to keep its housing management in-house, it will have to follow a competitive process.

I was asked what would happen if there were a conflict between tenants' right to manage and CCT. The answer is that if tenants want to take over responsibility for management, that takes precedence. The local authority then does not have to pursue CCT. Tenants can take over responsibility for managing their estate—there is provision for a break clause in any existing agreement—so to that extent, they take precedence over CCT.

The effect of CCT——

Mr. Straw: I am grateful for that undertaking. Under the Bill, tenants have no right of veto over candidates in the competitive process—is that right?

Sir George Young: The hon. Gentleman is right, but there will be much more tenant involvement and consultation than at present. For instance, tenants will be consulted on specifications and they will be involved in monitoring the contract. We are trying to build a constructive, on-going, meaningful relationship between tenants and local authorities, rather than using the blunt instrument of a veto.

Tenants will have rights to consultation on the terms of management agreements, including those resulting from CCT. Local authorities will have to consult tenants on the standards of service proposed—for example, on the specification for the delegation. The authority has to consider the tenants' representations before it can make any decisions on the terms—that is, before it can invite tenders. Tenants will be involved in monitoring a contractor's performance, and the Secretary of State can also say in more detail how that consultation should be run.

The Government's case is that this represents an extensive package of rights, which give tenants a good opportunity to influence the management of their homes in a positive and beneficial way. That is more meaningful than giving them a rather blunt choice between yes or no at the end of a process.

Mr. Battle: What the Minister has said seems to give tenants some say after the event. Will they have the right to reject the choice of a managing agent who they are not convinced will properly manage their estate? Will they be involved at that primary stage?

Sir George Young: No; tenants will not be able to impose a veto on the successful candidate after the process has been gone through, but they will have rights to consultation on the terms of an agreement, including those resulting from CCT—and they will be involved in monitoring the contract.

I hope that anyone thinking of putting in a bid for a contract will contact the tenants' representatives and organisations to gain some insight into what they want and to build a constructive relationship with the tenants on an estate. The introduction of a ballot would be clumsy and ineffectual, and would provide no positive value for the quality of housing management. We want authorities to involve tenants in all stages of the process of selecting contractors, as far as practicable.

The Bill provides for tenants to be consulted on drawing up the contract specification and the identity of the contractor, and to be involved in monitoring his performance. It will be open to authorities to involve tenants in helping to choose the successful contractor, subject to the usual requirements of commercial confidentiality, and we shall encourage them to do so. That is as far as I can go to meet the hon. Gentleman's point.

CCT for housing management is about improving the quality of life for people on our council estates. As housing management is exposed increasingly to the disciplines and business practices of the private sector, the fresh wind of competition will blow through estates up and down the land, raising standards and improving value for money.

Of course, it is true that local authority housing management has improved in recent years, but there are still too many estates where management breakdown is evident, with empty properties boarded up for long periods or taken over by squatters, and with common areas displaying numerous signs of neglect—lifts not working, rubbish chutes blocked, vandalism, litter and graffiti.

This grim picture is all too familiar. Tenants are not getting the deal they deserve. We are determined to ensure that the standards in the worst authorities and on the worst estates are raised to those of the best. It can be done. Some local authority services have been subject to CCT for more than 10 years. The improvement in the standard of service delivery has been plain for all to see; so have the savings in costs—6 per cent. across the board. It would be wholly wrong to deny the benefits of competition to housing management——

7.45 pm

Mr. Raynsford: Will the Minister give way?

Sir George Young: Yes, when I get to the end of this moving passage.

The experience of the Conservative-controlled London borough of Wandsworth underlines the point. It has already put its housing management out to competition, and its tenants and council tax payers have reaped the benefits. If one of the best-run and most tightly managed authorities in the country can achieve significant savings, I invite hon. Members to think what others can do.

Mr. Raynsford: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way after that moving passage. He has shown his commitment to Wandsworth; but will he tell us what representations he and the Department have received from tenants all over the country who have said that they want to retain the ultimate right of veto because, without it, they cannot say no to an unsatisfactory contractor? Why will he not accept that tenants should have that right; why will he not give it to them, to ensure that they have real power instead of this charade of consultation?

Sir George Young: The hon. Gentleman asked Ministers the same question several times in Committee and on Report. He knows the answer perfectly well: we do not think that it would be right for tenants to be able to veto the improvement in standards that we want. There is often a rather cosy relationship between the activists in tenants' associations and the local authority trade unions, and we would not want that to stand in the way of higher standards on estates.

Mr. Battle: Why is there a ballot for tenant management organisations at the initial stage when the Minister is not willing to grant one before a management agency is chosen?

Sir George Young: There is a ballot for TMOs because they have put up their hands to take over the management of estates in the name of all the tenants there. It is therefore legitimate to establish whether they have a mandate, to determine whether the tenants' organisation is truly representative. I have just explained that that does not provide a parallel with giving tenants the veto with which to block the process of housing management CCT.

Lords amendment No. 181 inserts a new clause dealing with consultation on management agreements under CCT. Without it, clause 117 would still apply to delegation under CCT, but there are enough differences between the procedures that an authority would follow when delegating voluntarily and those that it would follow under CCT to merit specific mention of the CCT case. That is what the new clause does. Because of the differences in procedure, some modifications to the consultation arrangements will be necessary.

Clause 117, for example, refers to consultation when an authority proposes to enter into an agreement. However, under CCT, when an authority wants to do the work itself, it will propose to enter into an agreement only and when it has lost a tendering exercise. That would be far too late for consultation on the terms of the agreement, so the new clause will allow the Secretary of State to take the procedure back in time to when the authority is going to invite tenders under the CCT legislation.

The Government's intention is that, where there is CCT, tenants should not lack any of the rights enjoyed by tenants where there is a voluntary delegation. The amendments would enable that to happen. I hope that they are not controversial.

Mr. Straw: Will there be consultation with local authority associations and tenants' representatives about the draft regulations that will bring the legislation into effect?

Sir George Young: Yes. We hope to lay the regulations by April and shall consult on many of the aspects of housing management before we take a decision. We shall consult representatives of tenants and local authorities.

Although the hon. Gentleman did not mention the publication he referred to an article that appeared in a recent edition of *Inside Housing* about the Bill's tenant consultation provisions. The Government propose that certain aspects of housing management should be defined activities for CCT purposes. Those defined activities will have to be put out to tender if an authority intends to carry out the work itself. Any resulting agreement will be a management agreement and the normal consultation procedures will apply.

CCT will not enable authorities to enter into management agreements without consultation. We do not accept that there is a potential loophole. Where management functions are delegated, a management agreement will arise. Therefore, I do not share the hon. Gentleman's fears that it will be possible to get around the provisions of the legislation.

Mr. Straw: The Minister is something of a Jekyll and Hyde character, and when he speaks to a script he sounds like a combination of Dr. Hastings Banda and Mr. Alan Clark. He treated us to the most extraordinary statement when he said that tenants could not be trusted. It reminds me of the way in which the great Dr. Banda—for the benefit of those who read my remarks rather than listen to them, I should say that I use the word "great" ironically—has managed to resist any semblance of democracy in Malawi for the past 30 years on the ground that, if the peasants had the right to vote, they might exercise it against him and his interests. We had a flavour of that from the Minister.

There was a wonderful elision between the assertion that tenants associations may not be representative, which is true in some cases, and the implicit assertion—with which we were all invited to agree—that, because some tenants associations may not be representative, a secret ballot of all tenants was likely to result in an unrepresentative verdict of what the tenants wanted. That is an extraordinary assertion for a democrat.

That was the Hastings Banda part of the Minister's speech, and before that we heard the Alan Clark part. The Minister has only one attribute in common with Alan Clark. I make it clear that it has nothing whatever to do with the Minister's private life. I almost said the late Mr. Alan Clark, but that hope has not yet materialised for Conservative Members. The Minister and Mr. Clark share the entertaining ability to mock their own speeches when they do not believe a word of them.

The Minister made some cerebral remarks about the right of veto and CCT. He changed to auto-pilot when reading from a passage which he obviously found unconvincing and revolting. He described it as a moving

passage, but he was unmoved. The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office is seeking to ensure that compulsory competitive tendering is applied in Malawi if Dr. Hastings Banda is still there after today's vote. That would be consistent with the support that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has been extending to the puppet regime in Malawi for so long.

The Minister said that CCT was intended to improve the quality of life for tenants and provide a "fresh wind of competition" for them. Tenants can themselves decide whether they want an improvement in their quality of life. If they vote for it, that is fine, because they are the only judges of that. They should have CCT imposed on them if that is their wish, and if about 90 per cent. of them vote for all kinds of other horrors, so be it. The democratic principle is that the majority should decide, and the tenants have a right to decide on their quality of life: decisions should not be imposed by Ministers.

The Minister sped through what he called the moving passage, which contained a reference to empty properties. In the light of the report that I published about four or five weeks ago on empty Government properties, I hope that we shall not have any more dissembling from the Minister on that issue. Some 15 per cent. of the properties for which the Minister and his colleagues are responsible are empty. The Government have 25,000 empty properties and Opposition Members, such as my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) are doing their damnedest to get some of those empty properties out of the Ministry of Defence and other Ministries, but are running into one blockage after another.

Local authorities, and especially Labour local authorities, have on the whole an excellent record on the management of empty properties. No authority has more than 4 per cent. of its total stock empty for management reasons. That means that the properties are empty and available to let or empty and available to let after minor repairs.

Earlier this year, the Minister spoke on the Walden programme and tried to pretend that Manchester had 5,000 empty properties. I hope that he will apologise to Manchester for the way in which he traduced its record, because it does not have 5,000 empty properties available to let as he sought to imply. Some 5,000 properties on its books do not have tenants, but about 1,500 of those are in the Hulme district and were put up, not least on the suggestion of speculative industrial builders—all of them contributors to Tory funds—in the 1960s. Those properties are uninhabitable. One would not put a pig in them, and if the Minister had bothered to go on a tour of Manchester, he would know that they are being demolished.

Another 1,500 properties in Manchester are in desperate need of major repairs, but they cannot be carried out, thanks to the Government's parsimony—the Governments's refusal to allow authorities to use capital receipts accrued before the end of November 1992. Those properties are empty, not because of inefficiency by Manchester city council but directly because of Government policy. When allowances are made for that, far from having an unacceptable record, Manchester has about 2 per cent. of empty properties, which is about average. That percentage is well below the percentage in Redbridge, which still has a large stock of housing. That is not an authority like Tonbridge and Malling; it is Conservative-controlled.

The record of Labour housing authorities generally is the best in the land. It is far better than that of the private sector or the owner-occupied sector, a little better than that of housing associations and infinitely better than that of central Government.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): My hon. Friend spoke about the so-called woeful reputation of Manchester. Knowsley is constantly trotted out as being among the top 10 worst authorities for vacant properties. The properties that are empty there are mostly being decanted, and they are mostly blocks of flats that are to be handed over to housing associations. The Under-Secretary of State is aware of that, because he visited the area and was told about it. Despite that, the Government still trot out statistics purporting to show that Knowsley is performing badly.

8 pm

Mr. Straw: My hon. Friend is right. The point that Ministers have made—that mandatory and compulsory competitive tendering should be supported even when the tenants do not want it—is based on the grounds that, somehow, the tenants need to be saved from the record of their local authorities. To support their case, Ministers have said that there are thousands upon thousands of empty properties, which housing authorities—typically, Labour authorities—are failing properly to manage and are leaving empty. The figures tell a different story.

It is something of a compliment to Labour authorities that, to try to damn their records, Ministers have had to fiddle the figures and drag into them not only the properties that are empty and ought to be let, but all those that are empty and uninhabitable, empty and in need of major repair or empty and awaiting transfer to a housing association, housing action trust or large-scale voluntary transfer.

If the Minister responds to this short debate, I hope that he will apologise for the way in which he has traduced the reputation of housing authorities, and that he will instruct Conservative central office—if he has any influence with that strange body—not to put out any more misleading information about the record of Labour housing authorities. I think that Ministers are learning that such statements from Conservative central office have a habit of boomeranging and returning to Conservative authorities. That has been the case on fraud and corruption and on value for money. The right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) was rash enough before the county elections to talk about them being fought on value for money. He got his answer on 6 May. That will also be the case here.

Sir George Young: The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) is wrong in what he says about management voids. The figures that I published were for management voids. That left out the properties that are derelict for other reasons. I gave those figures at Question Time a fortnight ago. They represent management voids and were exactly the figures for which the hon. Gentleman asked. I have no intention of apologising to Manchester city council. It gave me the figures that I used. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will consider apologising to Suffolk Coastal and Tunbridge Wells, each of which has transferred nearly the whole of its housing stock but has a handful of voids —two, I think, in one case.

[Sir George Young]

By fiddling the figures, the hon. Gentleman has pretended that Suffolk Coastal was a worse housing authority than Lambeth or Hackney. He confused no one with that mischievous allegation. It is clear from listening to him that he is not concerned with improving standards for tenants. He is much more interested in protecting trade union monopolies. I hope that the House will agree to all the amendments.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 176 to 180 agreed to.

New clause

MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS AND COMPULSORY COMPETITIVE TENDERING

Lords amendment: No. 181, after clause 117 insert the following new clause—

(". After section 27A of the 1985 Act there shall be inserted the following section—

"*Management agreements and compulsory competitive tendering*

27AA.—(1) This section shall apply if the Secretary of State makes an order under section 2(3) of the Local Government Act 1988 ('the 1988 Act') providing for the exercise of any management functions to be a defined activity for the purposes of Part I of that Act (compulsory competitive tendering).

(2) The Secretary of State may by regulations provide that in any case where—

(a) a local housing authority propose to make an invitation to carry out any functional work in accordance with the rules set out in subsection (4) of section 7 of the 1988 Act (functional work: conditions), and

(b) the proposal is such that any decision by the authority that the work should be carried out by the person or one of the persons proposed to be invited would necessarily involve their entering into a management agreement with that person,

the provisions of section 27A shall have effect with such modifications as appear to the Secretary of State to be necessary or expedient.

(3) Nothing in section 6 of the 1988 Act (functional work: restrictions) shall apply in relation to any functional work which, in pursuance of a management agreement, is carried out by the manager as agent of the local housing authority.

(4) In this section 'functional work' has the same meaning as in Part I of the 1988 Act.

(5) Regulations under this section shall be made by statutory instrument which shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament."")

Read a Second time.

Motion made, and Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 259, Noes 109.

Division No. 296] **[8.03 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth

Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Alton, David
Armstrong, Hilary
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bennett, Andrew F.
Bermingham, Gerald
Betts, Clive
Boyce, Jimmy
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Clapham, Michael
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Corbett, Robin
Corston, Ms Jean
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Faulds, Andrew
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Fraser, John
George, Bruce
Godsiff, Roger
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kirkwood, Archy
Lewis, Terry
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Raynsford, Nick
Rendel, David
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rowlands, Ted
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Gordon McMaster and
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle.

Question accordingly agreed to.—[Special entry.]

Lords amendments Nos. 182 to 188 agreed to, some with special entry.

New clause

CALCULATION OF HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT SUBSIDY

Lords amendment: No. 189, after clause 125 insert the following new clause—

(". In subsection (1) of section 80 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (determination of formulae for calculating Housing Revenue Account subsidy), the words 'and for any year the first such determination shall be made before the 25th December immediately preceding that year' shall cease to have effect.")

Read a Second time.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Sir George Young.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this, we may take Lords amendments Nos. 217, 278 and 283.

Mr. Pike: Can the Minister explain why the change involving the date of 25 December has been made? Is it connected with the change in Budget arrangements, under which tax and benefit provisions will both be announced in November, or is it because the Government have rarely achieved the 25 December target and are therefore regularising the position?

As I am sure the Minister will recognise, given all the implications for local authorities, it is essential that we dispense with a system that is increasingly causing all local authorities considerable difficulties, regardless of which party is in control. Many key decisions affect their budgets when they are compelled to comply with legislation according to a rigid timetable. Many of the key factors affected by Government decisions are announced increasingly late, which makes it increasingly difficult for councils to meet their statutory requirements.

Sir George Young: As the hon. Gentleman implied, the amendments are indeed about the arrangements for the unified Budget. The background to the amendments was the announcement in last year's Budget speech that the Government have decided to change the annual Budget timetable so that tax and spending proposals can in future be presented to Parliament at the same time in the form of a unified Budget. The Government are planning on the basis that the date of the unified Budget this year will be no later than the last week of November.

We are required by legislation to consult representatives of local government on the proposed subsidy determinations before they are issued in final form, but we

[Sir George Young]

generally have to await the Chancellor's unified Budget announcement of Government spending plans before doing so. In such circumstances, there will be insufficient time after the unified Budget announcement to allow authorities a reasonable period in which to comment on the draft determinations and for my right hon. Friend to consider those comments and then issue the determinations in their final form before the 25 December deadline. Hence the need for the amendment.

In response to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike), I can say that every effort will be made to issue the subsidy determinations as soon as possible after Christmas. The Department has stated its intention to do so by 10 January. That has been made possible by the helpful suggestion of local government representatives, which the Government have accepted, to shorten the consultation period on the draft determinations so that it can end before Christmas.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 190 to 283 agreed to, some with special entry.

Committee appointed to draw up reasons to be assigned to the Lords for disagreeing to their amendment No. 6: Mr. John Battle, Mr. Tony Baldry, Mr. Timothy Kirkhope, Mr. Jack Straw, Sir George Young; Three to be the quorum; to withdraw immediately.—*[Mr. Baldry.]*

Reasons for disagreeing to one of the Lords amendments reported, and agreed to; to be communicated to the Lords.

Representation of the People Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

8.26 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Jeremy Hanley): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I shall explain the background briefly. Members of the Ulster Defence Regiment—the UDR—were regarded as part of the reserve and auxiliary forces and registered as civilian electors. Following the merger of the UDR and the Royal Irish Rangers to form the Royal Irish Regiment, the home service component of the regiment became part of the Regular Army. As members of the regular forces, the Representation of the People Act 1983 confers on those who now enlist as full-time home service personnel a service qualification; hence, they may register only as service voters. It is illegal for them to register as civilian voters.

As for part-time members of the home service battalions, it is possible to argue that their liability for call-out renders them part of a reserve and auxiliary force and therefore exempt from the provisions for service voting. All personnel serving our existing UDR engagements may continue to register as civilian voters.

Our concern is that, under the electoral system in Northern Ireland, canvassers who are not security cleared distribute and collect registration forms from households. Home service personnel who had enlisted since the merger would have to tell the canvassers that they were no longer eligible for registration on the standard civilian voter registration form and that, coupled with the eventual appearance of their names on the completed register, could lead to their identification as home service personnel.

I in no way wish to cast doubt on the integrity of canvassers, who do a very difficult job very well, but it is possible to conceive of a risk, and it is only prudent to take measures to remove it. After study, we concluded that it would best be done by amending the Representation of the People Act 1983.

A secondary consideration is that the service voter arrangements are meant to assist service personnel serving overseas and home service personnel serve only in Northern Ireland, except during some limited periods of training. The Bill provides for amendment to the definition of who constitutes a member of the armed forces in section 59(1) of the 1983 Act. Because of the exclusion of home service personnel from the definition, they will be able to continue to register as civilian voters. The reference to a member of the Regular Army means that officers and soldiers are included and the amendment extends to full and part-time home service personnel, thus removing any doubt about the position in law of part-timers.

In order that the changes may be put into effect before the annual registration round, which begins in August, we seek commencement on Royal Assent. I therefore commend this short Bill to the House.

8.29 pm

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): I congratulate the Minister on his new appointment. I understand that he was under fire on Friday and I look forward to doing battle with him, probably on Thursday, about Britain's defence policy—but not tonight.

It is not late at night, so we can spend a long time debating the Bill. Nevertheless, the issue is not contentious, and I therefore do not intend to delay the House. The Bill is one of those commonsense measures that should be dealt with administratively. I understand that the Government investigated that possibility but found that it was not possible. The necessary adjustments must, therefore, be put before the House. I understand that there is some urgency and that the Bill must be given Royal Assent by August, otherwise we will not be able to complete the necessary adjustments to the electoral register in Northern Ireland. The fact that the Bill must be rushed through shows that perhaps there was an oversight on the part of the Government.

I said earlier that the Bill is a common-sense measure, but it reflects the level of terrorism and violence on the Northern Irish scene in the past 25 years. It surely cannot be acceptable that soldiers serving their country must hide their occupation to avoid assassination, but that is the sad reality. In the 22-year history of the Ulster Defence Regiment, 244 soldiers or former soldiers were murdered by terrorists. Most of them were murdered off duty, and some of them in front of their families. Let us not forget that the Bill is necessary because of the failure of politicians on both sides of the House and on both sides of the Irish sea to deal with the problem of terrorism.

The Labour party supports the Bill and hopes that it passes all its stages tonight, but we look forward to the time when we can ask for its repeal and when there is peace in Ulster.

8.31 pm

Sir James Kilfedder (North Down): I welcome the Minister to the Dispatch Box in his new capacity of Minister of State for the Armed Forces. It is a matter of regret that he has left the Northern Ireland Office, where he served the people of Northern Ireland well. We wish to congratulate him and hope that he will have further success in his new capacity.

The Royal Irish Regiment, the successor to the Ulster Defence Regiment, and its members face death daily and nightly and everything must be done to protect them from further hazard, which is why the Bill is welcome and should progress speedily.

As the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) said, the Ulster Defence Regiment has suffered great losses. Many of its members have been slaughtered by the IRA. That is what the people of Northern Ireland face. We must give every protection to those who serve the people of Northern Ireland. Members of the Royal Irish Regiment show great courage in carrying out their job, which is why I give the Bill my full support.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment.

Order for Third Reading read.

8.35 pm

Mr. Hanley: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I thank the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) for his kind remarks and for his co-operation. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for North Down (Sir J. Kilfedder) for his kind remarks and, on behalf of those who are served by the Bill, I thank the House for its co-operation.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees).

Fats (Marketing Standards)

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 10344/91 and 5019/93, relating to marketing standards for fats; and supports the Government's intention to seek amendments to the amended proposal in line with the conclusions on subsidiarity and proportionality already agreed by the Community.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees).

Hydrocarbons (Exploration and Extraction)

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4180/93, relating to licensing of exploration and extraction of hydrocarbons; and welcomes the Government's attempts to secure transparent, fully competitive and non-discriminatory access to hydrocarbon resources throughout the European Community through the adoption of the amended draft Directive.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Question agreed to.

Human Rights (Tibet)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

8.37 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): It is an unusually early hour for the House to adjourn, but I am pleased to have the opportunity of raising the issue of human rights abuse in Tibet. I am grateful to the Minister for being present and I know that one of his colleagues hopes to attend the debate and to speak.

I know that the Minister shares the concern of myself and others about the appalling catalogue of torture, imprisonment and killings that have marked China's control of Tibet.

The plight of Tibet has been highlighted in the past few months by the Dalai Lama's visit to Britain and to this place, when many Members of Parliament had the opportunity to meet him, and by the brutal Chinese reaction to the demonstrations that coincided with the European Community mission's visit to Tibet.

I am sure that the Minister will join me in welcoming the lead that the Dalai Lama has given his people. I welcome the Government's recent stance that the main avenue for a peaceful resolution of the problems in Tibet are talks without preconditions between the Dalai Lama and the Chinese authorities.

I hope that the Minister will join me condemning the attempt over the weekend to exclude the Dalai Lama from the world conference on human rights in Vienna. Could the Minister confirm that the call for exclusion came from the Chinese Government? It is an important point that the Dalai Lama was not permitted to take part in that conference, and it would be useful if the Minister could confirm who called for the Dalai Lama's exclusion.

In the light of pressure from some of the world's most tyrannical and brutal regimes to destroy the universality of human rights, could the Minister give the House an unequivocal commitment that the Government will continue to regard all human rights from the universal declaration of human rights as applying to all? Clearly, with the many abuses of human rights throughout the world, it is sometimes easy to be overcome by the sheer scale of problems, whether they are in Somalia, the Sudan or Bosnia. The fact that Tibet is a faraway place to which we have limited access, and that the world's media cannot highlight events there in the same way as they do atrocities that take place elsewhere, is not a reason for us to treat it as out of sight and out of mind.

The Dalai Lama in particular is to be congratulated on his unswerving advocacy of non-violent opposition to Chinese violence, for which he has been honoured by being awarded the Nobel peace prize. My immediate concern is that, following recent events in Lhasa, that strategy is at risk.

The Minister will be aware of the arbitrary arrests, detention without trial and tear-gassing of demonstrators that occurred before and during the visits of 16 to 23 May. He will also be aware of the wholly inadequate response given to the European Community delegation by the Chinese authorities. I want to emphasise in particular, the case of two prisoners whose welfare may well affect the future of Tibet. One is Gendon Rinchen and the other is Lobsang Yonten. They are both being held at an unspecified location, accused of stealing a large amount of state secrets.

Both men were involved in monitoring human rights violations, and may have been engaged in compiling a list of prisoners of conscience to present to the European Community delegation. The most sinister aspect of their case is that they are being held in secret. In the past, those held in that way have been subject to the most brutal torture, and these two men are now clearly in extreme danger. Therefore, it is particularly appropriate that their case should be raised tonight—not least because the European Community delegation had expected to receive information from those two men about human rights abuses.

I would also refer the Minister to the case of a 26-year-old woman, Sonam Dalar, who was tortured over six months at a detention centre in Lhasa in 1990-91. She escaped in 1991 and was able to reveal what the Chinese do to those merely suspected of political dissent. Sonam Dalar was kept naked and incommunicado in a bare underground cell. She was regularly tortured with electric batons, and was beaten and electrocuted until she lost consciousness. After six months, she was vomiting and urinating blood daily. I could mention many other similar cases were the time available. Suffice it to say, however, that among the list of detainees maltreated in Chinese prisons in Tibet for political dissent are a boy of 14 and a girl of 12.

Gendon Rinchen and Lobsang Yonten are well known in Tibet. Their cases are being widely watched and followed closely. I share the concern of groups such as the Tibet Support Group that, if the world cannot apply enough pressure on the Chinese to ensure at least the basic minimum of civilised detention, such as visits from families and details of locations at which prisoners are being held, Tibetans will reconsider their non-violent strategy on the basis that international pressure can have no effect on Communist China's attitudes to Tibet. I ask the Minister to confirm tonight that he will approach the Chinese authorities, both with a view to gaining access for British officials to visit both men and with a view to highlighting those cases.

I should also like to draw the Minister's attention to nine arrests that took place on 4 and 6 June. The latest reported protest incident in Lhasa took place on Sunday 6 June, when three monks wearing civilian clothes were arrested shortly before 2 pm in the south-east corner of Barkor, the pilgrimage route that surrounds Lhasa's main temple. The monks, whose names are not known, were shouting slogans and carrying a white banner, and—according to foreign tourists in the city who were contacted by the Tibetan independence movement—were apparently calling for independence.

A similar incident took place at about midday on Friday 4 June, when six men were arrrested a few minutes after they appeared in the Barkor square carrying Tibetan flags. One report said that the men—described by one foreign witness as about 18 years old—were in three separate groups around the square for the few minutes during which the incident lasted. The tourists, contacted by telephone in Lhasa, claimed that the men had been beaten with sticks during the 4 June arrests. According to one tourist, between 15 and 20 police in riot gear were on duty in the square during the day, which marked an important Buddhist festival. A large number of

plain-clothes police were also evident on 4 June, together with security officials who, according to the report, were using "sophisticated equipment".

Individual cases such as those that I have cited tonight emphasise the wider degradation of Tibet at the hands of the Chinese—the mass population transfers of Han Chinese into Tibet and the destruction of Tibetan culture, the environmental rape of Tibet to supply Chinese factories with raw materials and the abuse of aid to Tibet, such as that provided by the World Food Programme, whose aid is administered by Chinese officials to produce food for the Chinese by methods inappropriate to Tibetan culture. That litany describes what has been happening to that small faraway country.

Let me also draw the Minister's attention to the mass abuse of Tibetan women who, along with Chinese women, are being forcibly sterilised and aborted, under laws that clearly breach the right to found a family freely. Accounts of infanticide, mass enforced late abortion and compulsory sterilisation are horrific enough. I was even more surprised to discover that, since its inception, the Chinese population control programme has been financially fuelled by the International Planned Parenthood Federation and by the United Nations Family Planning Association, and that, over the last 10 years for which figures are available, Britain contributed £104 million to that cause by funding those two organisations.

In other words, the British taxpayer contributes £7 million to £9 million a year to programmes administered by UNFPA and IPPF which have been used by Chinese population programmes forcibly to fit IUDs and to sterilise and abort women who do not comply with population targets.

In Tibet in particular, that has been used deliberately to distort the population balance. When he was here recently, the Dalai Lama highlighted that very case elsewhere in the Palace. Indeed, in the declaration that was issued by European parliamentarians who gathered here in Westminster, that was one of the things that were highlighted as running totally contrary to any system of human rights—a fact that we were urged to impress upon the Chinese Government. That is a matter about which we can do something.

I am aware of the persistent denials of forced abortion and sterilisation from the Chinese Government—denials that have been regularly supported by the IPPF and UNFPA. Those denials have about as much validity as the assertion that torture is illegal in China and Tibet and is therefore merely an aberration when it occurs.

It is a scandal that British taxpayers' money is being used by the UNFPA to manufacture IUDs which will be forcibly inserted by law into Chinese and Tibetan women. It is also a scandal that the IPPF, funded by the British Government, passes money to the Chinese family planning association, which works hand in glove with that oppressive Government.

It is absurd to talk about the family planning association in China as though it resembled a British voluntary organisation. Surely we know enough about the Chinese Government following the massacres in Tiananmen square and the recent brutal killing of a Catholic bishop—in which I know the Minister has taken a personal interest—and about the way in which ordinary people in China, especially those who try to express their religious beliefs and to worship as they would wish, have been repressed, to know that it is not possible for a voluntary organisation along the lines of those that exist in the United Kingdom to flourish in China. To be pumping money into those organisations knowing that they are simply groups that work as an adjunct of Government is extraordinarily naive, to put it at its best.

I have raised these matters with Dr. Halfdan Mahler of the IPPF, without receiving the courtesy of a reply. I have sponsored an early-day motion supported by many hon. Members on both sides of the House who are equally appalled by the abuse of human rights. I have raised it in person with the Minister for Overseas Aid. I welcome her determination to oppose and end any oppressive population control. She has been extremely helpful and interested in this matter, and I was very satisfied with the reply that both she and her officials gave me when I went to see her about the matter some months ago.

The Minister will understand that this is an issue to which I intend to continue to return. The more evidence that becomes available, the more I think that the British Government should follow the example of the previous American Administration under George Bush, who withdrew funding from those very programmes because they were convinced of the authenticity of the claims that were being made about the abuses.

Do the British Government intend to continue to fund supporters of that barbaric policy? What evidence, if any, does the Minister have of a Chinese change of heart on population control? Does he have any information about any Chinese official who has been charged, tried or imprisoned for abusing the human rights of women in that way?

It is in the nature of foreign affairs that commentators continually question the motivation of foreign policy. Is policy founded on principle or pragmatism? Do trade concerns and export policy, rather than suffering and need, dictate our overseas aid policy? Does the situation in Hong Kong dictate our response to Tibet?

There is also a recent allegation, which I am sure the Minister will take this opportunity to refute, that because the Conservative party has received donations from prominent Chinese communists, that in some way affects the Government's policy towards China. I know that the Minister is totally honourable and I would be grateful if he would place on record the fact that that kind of funding has nothing whatsoever to do with the way in which British Government policy is made.

Tibet is an issue on which the Government can and should display their moral resolve. The Prime Minister is on record as proclaiming that overseas aid is tied to human rights performance. We provide aid to China and Tibet by numerous national and international avenues. Has the Foreign Office pointed out to Chinese officials that aid can be withdrawn if there are not tangible improvements in their human rights record?

Representations have been made to the Chinese on human rights in Tibet since that country was invaded. What success can the Minister claim for his current policy? What benchmarks and targets does he set himself when considering China's abuse of human rights? I suggest that greater determination in pursuing that cause would yield results. For example, I applauded the visit of the delegation led by Lord Howe to China last year to discuss human rights.

I was delighted with the wide consultation that preceded the visit with non-governmental organisations working to improve human rights in that country. We

[Mr. David Alton]

were told that the delegation would hopefully be followed by a similar visit to Tibet. More than eight months after the visit, the delegation's report has still not been published, there has been no report back to NGOs, and all talk of a visit to Tibet has ceased. Can the Minister give assurances tonight that those matters will be speedily resolved?

Mere representations to the Government who perpetrated the Tiananmen square massacre are not enough. The Chinese must be shown that we mean business and that their aid will be threatened if there are not substantial improvements in the way they treat the people under their control in China and Tibet.

I hope that this Government will have the moral courage to make that commitment on behalf of the terrorised, the tortured and the imprisoned in one of the last communist tyrannies in the world. I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to raise this matter in this Adjournment debate.

8.52 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) is well known and widely respected in this House and outside for his interest in Tibet and in human rights issues generally. I am indebted to him for bringing these important matters to the attention of the House.

May I begin by assuring the hon. Gentleman once again that human rights, particularly in Tibet, are of deep concern to the Government and are a central element in our dialogue with the Chinese authorities. The hon. Gentleman has rightly drawn attention to the concern felt by the British public and by the House about the situation in Tibet and especially about the recent events there. He raised the cases of Gendon Rinchen and Lobsang Yonten, and I undertake to follow up what he said and look into the background extremely carefully.

Many hon. Members will have met His Holiness the Dalai Lama during his visit to this country last month, or at least will have heard him speak in the meetings held in the Grand Committee Room on 4 May. As all hon. Members know, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary had a private meeting with the Dalai Lama on 12 May, during which a number of issues, including human rights issues in Tibet and elsewhere in China, and the matters raised by the hon. Gentleman tonight, were discussed.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary assured the Dalai Lama that we would continue to pursue our dialogue on human rights with the Chinese authorities at every opportunity, and he emphasised that we would continue to urge the Chinese authorities to enter a genuine dialogue, without preconditions, with the Tibetans, including with the Dalai Lama, and so we will.

The hon. Gentleman alluded to the recent visit to Tibet by a group of European Community ambassadors in Peking and senior diplomats based there. That important mission took place on the initiative of the EC embassies. It was arranged with assistance from the Foreign Affairs Office in Lhasa, in consultation with the EC presidency.

An extensive week's programme was organised, including meetings with Vice-Governor Thondrup, in the absence of the Governor who was recovering from illness in Chengdu, and representatives of the Commissions for Foreign Economic Relations and Trade, Planning, Development, Health, Education and Nationalities and Religious Affairs. In addition, a meeting was arranged with the Supreme People's Court and the Public Security and Justice Departments.

The Drapchi prison in Lhasa, and the town of Shigatse, were also visited. During the meeting on 17 May with the Vice-Governor, a list of political prisoners, prepared thanks to assistance from Amnesty International and other NGOs, was handed over and information about them was requested. Members of the group asked a number of penetrating questions, and quite rightly so.

During his meeting with my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary on 12 May, the Dalai Lama also raised the question of population transfer of Han Chinese into Tibet. It is difficult, if not impossible, to confirm the accuracy of reports on the numbers of Han Chinese moving into Tibet. Different sources provide different figures and often refer to different geographical areas. In our view, it is important to distinguish between the Tibet autonomous region and what some Tibetans claim as Greater Tibet, embracing large parts of neighbouring Chinese provinces.

We are concerned by all reports of threats to the Tibetans' ethnic and cultural identity, and we will continue to urge the Chinese authorities to respect and protect traditional Tibetan values, culture and way of life. We have also drawn the attention of our European Community partners to those issues, so they can pursue them at the European level as well as bilaterally.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the recent reports of rioting in Lhasa and of the police action against demonstrators there. I understand that some tension remains. We are watching developments closely. In consultation with our European Community partners, we will continue to urge the Chinese authorities to conform to international standards of behaviour.

I began by reassuring the hon. Gentleman that human rights in Tibet and elsewhere in China are a central element in our bilateral and wider European Community relations with the Chinese authorities. The hon. Gentleman mentioned a number of abuses of human rights. There are many other examples, in addition to those which he mentioned.

The hon. Gentleman is particularly concerned about enforced abortion and the funding programme provided by the international agencies which are assisting the Chinese authorities in that population control programme. We are also aware of, and deeply concerned about, reports of enforced abortion in China. The British Government are opposed to any population activities in which there is any element of coercion of individuals to practice family planning or to accept any particular type of contraception, and so too—the hon. Gentleman acknowledged this—are the International Planned Parenthood Federation and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities.

Indeed, at the UNFPA governing council in New York on 2 June, Dr. Nafis Sadik, the UNFPA executive director, once more categorically stated that the UNFPA condemns coercion of population programmes. She emphasised:

"Coercion has no part in population and family planning, it is morally wrong and ultimately it will not be effective. This has always been UNFPA's position and it will never change."

At the governing council, the Chinese Government reiterated that they have been consistently opposed to coercive practice in whatever form while implementing their family planning policy. The British Government, the IPPF and the UNFPA do not advocate or condone induced abortion as a method of family planning. The IPPF and the UNFPA do not provide support for abortions or abortion-related activities in Tibet or elsewhere in China.

The IPPF and the UNFPA are the leading international agencies in population activities, and are important channels for the United Kingdom's population assistance. They are committed to supporting programmes which enable men and women to choose whether to have children and provide them with information and services to enable them to do so.

We believe that our most effective strategy in seeking to minimise abuses of reproductive rights in China and bring about a change in that country's population policy is to work through those two agencies. Their involvement in China has ensured that country's exposure to international values and practices which would not otherwise have occurred and is helping to promote a more humane population policy. The technical assistance they provide is essential if China is further to improve the health and welfare of its women and children.

Mr. Alton: The Minister will recall that I pointed out that the previous American Administration withdrew funding from the UNFPA and the IPPF because they had sufficient evidence of forced abortions, forced sterilisation and the forced fitting of inter-uterine devices.

Has he taken any steps to try to obtain the reports which the American Administration acted upon before arriving at that decision under the presidency of George Bush? If such information were to come to the right hon. Gentleman—I have heard first-hand accounts of women who had been able to leave Tibet and China and have been forcibly aborted—would he then abandon funding of those programmes?

Mr. Goodlad: I will inquire, because I do not know offhand whether the reports to which the hon. Gentleman refers were taken into account by the Overseas Development Administration when it renewed the subscription of those organisations. I will find out whether that is the case and communicate with the hon. Gentleman. I will also make sure that the evidence that he has brought to the attention of the House and his bilateral discussions with Lady Chalker are taken into account in the future formulation of policy. I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman for bringing those matters to the attention of the House.

We believe that the involvement of the agencies in China has ensured that country's exposure to international values and practices that would not otherwise have been brought to bear on what happens there, and that they are helping to promote a more humane population policy. The technical assistance that they provide is essential if China is further to improve the health and welfare of its women and children.

As the world's most populous nation, China must obviously be a priority country, both for the IPPF and the UNFPA. Both agencies are making a significant contribution to changing attitudes in China.

The ODA is in regular contact with the IPPF and the UNFPA about their activities in China, and of course it will continue to impress upon them the need for careful monitoring of China' population programme and the promotion of greater freedom of reproductive choice.

As I said, I will ensure that everything that the hon. Gentleman has brought to the attention of the House tonight is taken into account in future decisions. I can give an assurance that none of the extraneous factors that he mentioned has affected the way in which the policy of Her Majesty's Government has been geared to do that—he was gracious enough to anticipate that that is what I would say.

Mr. Alton: I ask the Minister to respond to my question about the Vienna conference, which is currently under way. At present, 180 Governments are discussing the question of the universality of human rights. Is that principle being resisted by the Chinese Government? Is it true that attempts were made to exclude the Dalai Lama from the conference? Is it the case that officials of Her Majesty's Government resisted those attempts?

Mr. Goodlad: I shall come to that point in a moment.

The hon. Gentleman raised the question of Lord Howe's mission to China. We are awaiting the details of his formal report on his visit to China with interest. I understand that it is nearly finalised. Copies will be made available in the Library of the House and more generally to the public in due course.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the second world conference on human rights that is taking place in Vienna from 14 to 25 June. The United Kingdom, together with our European Community partners, has played an active role in the preparatory process and will be active at the conference. As the House may know, the world conference will be addressing overall thematic rather than country-specific issues.

The House will be aware of events over the weekend, when steps were taken to restrict participation at the conference. We and our European Community partners profoundly regret that steps were taken to prevent the Dalai Lama from attending the opening ceremony, while welcoming the invitation to him from the chairman of the governmental conference to attend the remainder of the conference. We understand that he will be participating in the NGO conference being held in parallel, which will be discussing thematic rather than country-specific issues.

We hope that both conferences will examine methods of improving the implementation of human rights instruments and seek ways to improve United Nations mechanisms in the protection and promotion of human rights. As the House will understand, the overall aim is that all participating countries will benefit from an exchange of views on their respective practices and provisions in this area.

The specific rights and freedoms codified in the universal declaration of human rights and the two international covenants transcend national, religious, cultural and ideological frontiers. We believe that those specific rights and freedoms are equally applicable to all persons in all circumstances. Whatever some people may think, human rights are no longer, and will never again be, exempt from external pressure on grounds of state sovereignty. The United Nations Security Council endorses that by recognising that gross violations may

[Mr. Goodlad]

endanger international peace and security. United Nations peacekeeping efforts now incorporate human rights verification.

Human rights issues in Tibet are frequently associated with aspirations for independence. As I told the hon. Gentleman and the House, we regularly speak to the Chinese about the need for better protection of human rights in Tibet and more autonomy there. But the fact is that Tibet has never been an internationally recognised independent country. We have consistently encouraged the Chinese to enter into a dialogue with Tibetans, including the Dalai Lama, without preconditions. We will continue to do so, because we believe that that is the most promising, indeed the only promising, way forward.

The Chinese can be and are in no doubt about the strength of feeling of Her Majesty's Government, of this House and, more widely, this country about their behaviour in Tibet. There have been changes in the Chinese economy in recent years. We welcome that, and China's so-called open door policy. It is our hope, and that of our Community partners, that, as standards of economic prosperity rise, so will standards of democratic accountability.

The House recognises, because it has heard it before, that the Chinese view is that human rights are not universal, but vary with each society's specific historical conditions. China is one of those developing countries that is trying to introduce that definition of human rights into the final statement of the world conference in Vienna. The Chinese place emphasis on rights to shelter, clothing and nutrition, in contrast to the wider view of human rights which the House and the hon. Member for Mossley Hill have quite rightly put forward.

We and our Community partners are holding firm, and I hope, doing our bit to help human rights in China by, for example, training Chinese lawyers, accountants and administrators—some of the essential human resources that, in practical terms, will make good government and the reality of an extension of human rights practicable and possible.

We hope that the Chinese authorities will agree to talk to the Dalai Lama without preconditions. For his part, he emphasised during his recent visit to this country his readiness to enter such negotiations, and hinted at a compromise based upon the one country, two systems, formula.

We will continue to urge those concerned to enter into real dialogue and to encourage the Chinese to allow ethnic Tibetans a greater and proper say in running their own affairs. We will continue to urge the Chinese authorities to adhere to international standards of behaviour, to abide by their obligations under the United Nation's charter and to respect the values enshrined in the universal declaration of human rights.

I reiterate my gratitude and that of the House to the hon. Gentleman for raising the specific matters that have been put before the House. I also reiterate my undertaking to follow up those specific points.

9.15pm

Mr. Alton: I thank the Minister for the thorough way in which he dealt with the debate, and the assurances that he has given.

We will all be concerned to know of the Chinese Government's wish to see the universality of human rights destroyed and replaced by other criteria. The fact that that idea comes from a regime that has been notorious for its brutality and tyrannical methods must surely be something that we and other Community countries must resist.

The violation of women in Tibet and China is an issue that all hon. Members will want to come back to again and again. We will continue to monitor it. It is a scandal that the IPPF and the UNFPA are funding the construction of factories in China for the manufacture of IUDs, which will be forcibly inserted into Chinese and Tibetan women.

We can only imagine the misery and the pain that is caused to women who try to remove those devices, which have been placed within them to control their fertility. We can only imagine the sheer loneliness and desperation that many women must experience after they have been forcibly sterilised or forcibly aborted. It is to the eternal shame of western Governments that the money that funds those operations comes from our taxpayers.

I commend to the Minister a book by Mary Craig which was published recently and which highlights the fate of the Tibetan people.

I only hope that it will not be long before the Minister, after he has had a chance to ponder these questions, will come to the House of Commons to announce the end of funding for such barbaric and wholly unacceptable practices.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at sixteen minutes past Nine o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 15 June 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CITIBANK INTERNATIONAL BILL *[Lords]*
Read a Second time, and committed.

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION

Nursery Education

1. **Mr. Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he last met the Association of Metropolitan Authorities to discuss the provision of nursery education.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Mr. Robin Squire): No such meeting has been held recently.

Mr. Burden: May I welcome the Minister to his new appointment? When all the evidence, even from the Government's own tests, suggests that children perform better if they have received a nursery education, is he not ashamed that Britain is still the bottom of the European league in nursery provision? Will not he admit that the Secretary of State's comments about the so-called Mum's Army are actually more about devaluing the skills of those who teach children in those vital early years and avoiding the investment that is necessary in nursery education?

Mr. Squire: Given the warmth of the first part of the hon. Member's question, I am sorry to disagree so fundamentally with him on the rest. We believe, as we have restated many times, that the very diversity of provision for under-fives remains the best option. It recognises the various needs of children and their parents and makes the best use of what are inevitably limited resources. On the hon. Member's latter point, the recent consultation paper reflects our interests in extending the opportunities for capable people with considerable previous experience of working with young children to train to be early-years teachers.

Mr. Hawkins: May I warmly welcome my hon. Friend to his new responsibilities? Is it the case that when the last Labour Government left office only some 69 per cent. of under-fives received some form of pre-school provision, and now the figure is more than 90 per cent? Is not that a powerful confirmation of the progress that the Government have made in nursery education?

Mr. Squire: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, first, for his kind personal comments and secondly for underlining why the subject is so embarrassing for the Labour party. Labour Members say one thing when in opposition, but they invariably do something else when they are in government.

Mr. Steinberg: Is the Minister aware of the anger among parents and teachers at the proposals for diluting the primary training of teachers? Is he aware that, from an early age and at that early stage, children need professional teachers and not the dilution of the teaching profession? Will he please listen to teachers and parents before he makes a further stupid mistake to add to what the Government have done to education in the past 14 years?

Mr. Squire: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman rejects out of hand proposals that are designed to enhance rather than damage. If I may quote from the *Yorkshire Post:*

"I think that the professionals should give some thought during the coming weeks to dropping their prejudices and giving people the opportunity to test out the old saying: teachers are born—not made."

That comment was from a lady who is a graduate teacher and is also a playgroup leader.

Special Schools (Testing)

2. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what consideration he has given to the testing of pupils in special schools.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Mr. Eric Forth): Children with special educational needs should follow the national curriculum and participate in its associated assessment arrangements wherever possible, so that they have access to the same education as other pupils. The School Examinations and Assessment Council has given guidance to schools about ways in which the tests for both seven and 14-year-olds might be modified or adapted for those pupils. It is, however, possible where appropriate to disapply the national curriculum and assessment and testing for pupils with special needs.

I look forward to meeting my hon. Friend and his constituent, Mrs. Anne Hardman, head teacher of Queen's Croft school in Lichfield, to discuss these important issues.

Mr. Fabricant: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his helpful answer. However, will he concede that special schools are, by their very nature, special, and so are the children who are taught in them? Will he consider, perhaps at the meeting that we are to have later this month, placing greater emphasis on continual assessment and slightly less emphasis on exam results? But will he continue to press that exam results for all schools, including special schools, should continue to be published for the benefit of parental choice?

Mr. Forth: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend's last point and I emphasise that, whereas it is important that children in all schools, including special schools, are given the maximum opportunity to enjoy the benefits of the curriculum and regular testing, teachers have a great deal of scope to judge to what extent pupils are appropriate for particular testing. In that regard, I should mention the possibility and potential of the national record of achievement, which can be used at the discretion of schools

and teachers to sum up the achievements of pupils of all kinds from all schools when they have completed their education.

Mr. Spearing: The Minister mentioned the special needs of pupils, some of whom are statemented and some of whom are in special schools, and the need for the adaptation of tests. Does he agree that any reduction in the resources now available to those pupils, whether statemented in ordinary schools or in special schools, will not be approved by Her Majesty's Government?

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point. It is important that resources throughout education are properly directed to where they can be best and most effectively used and to those with the greatest need. The mechanisms that we now have and, more importantly, those being developed in the Education Bill in another place, go a long way to doing that. I look forward to the support of the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues in developing the thoughts and the mechanisms in the Education Bill which will be of enormous benefit, particularly to pupils with special educational needs.

Mr. Alexander: But surely it cannot be right to list the results of pupils in special schools without, at the same time, showing that they come from special schools? What incentive can there be for teachers or pupils if they know that they will be lumped in with everyone else without any recognition of pupils' learning disabilities?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend makes an important point to which we have given a great deal of thought. It is important to regard schools of all kinds as being well within the education system within which all pupils should be treated even-handedly and fairly. But we have gone some way, and we shall continue to go as far as we can, towards recognising the special nature of special schools and of units within mainstream schools in order to identify how their results can best be treated and reported so as to reflect fairly their special circumstances. That is our intention and we are prepared to continue to consider the matter and to continue to develop the reporting system in order to make it as fair as possible.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Given the Minister's last remarks, will not he admit that there is an insuperable problem here because many children in special schools can be categorised as moving towards level one, even at key stage 1, and that what we really need is some guidance from SEAC on how to develop levels of attainment in the period moving towards level one for which at the moment there are no guidelines? Does not the fact that parents want to know how their own children are doing, not necessarily what is happening in the whole school, underline the foolishness of league tables? This would be a good opportunity for the Minister to announce that league tables are out and more sophisticated ways of assessment are in.

Mr. Forth: There is always a tension between those who ask, as the hon. Gentleman just has, for more sophisticated methods of assessment and those who often complain that the system has become unwieldly and over-bureaucratic. That, among other things, is exactly the problem that Sir Ron Dearing, is considering in his review at the request of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I am conscious of the problem that the hon. Gentleman has outlined, but I believe that the arrangements for key stage 1 and the work leading up to it are broadly satisfactory. It is right that we continue to look at the arrangements to see whether they need be and can be improved, but we must be careful not to throw babies, or pupils, out with the bathwater in our eagerness to provide a more sophisticated approach to cover every category of pupil and, in this case perhaps, every individual pupil. We must keep faith with the principle of testing and ensure its integrity.

Student Unions

3. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he intends to take to reform student unions.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education (Mr. Tim Boswell): We have already made it clear that we intend to introduce the voluntary principle for student unions. We are currently completing our consultations on the role of campus unions and the National Union of Students, and their use of public funds. In the light of these consultations, we are considering proposals for action which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State expects to announce very shortly.

Mr. Riddick: I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware that the vast majority of university students find that they have to belong to a student union, which may do or say some extraordinary things in their name. Should not students have the freedom to decide for themselves whether they wish to belong to a student union? Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Government will take action to give students that freedom of choice?

Mr. Boswell: Yes, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Don Foster: Will the Minister convey to his hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) my congratulations on his first appearance on the Front Bench as an education Minister?

Does not the Minister agree that the growing problems of student hardship, graduate unemployment and the increased need for welfare services should be a far higher priority for him to tackle in higher education than the partly political—I cannot speak today, Madam Speaker—the party-politically motivated attacks by the Conservative party on individual student unions?

Mr. Boswell: The hon. Gentleman may not be able to speak today, but he can whinge, and that he has done. I am surprised by what he has said: he gives no credit for our recent publication of the draft further and higher education charters, which are designed to give new rights and an information revolution to students. I am surprised that he did not acknowledge the huge increase in the total amount of student support which has been achieved through the success of the student loan scheme—which has even been acknowledged by *The Times*. I am also surprised that he did not acknowledge the 46 per cent. increase in student numbers over the past four years.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the system of student support in the United Kingdom is more generous than that of any other country in the European Community? Will he further confirm that since

student loans were introduced there has been an increase rather than a decrease in the numbers applying for higher education?

Madam Speaker: Order. The question relates to student unions, not the support of students.

Mr. John Marshall: Those who apply for higher education then have a right to join a student union.

Madam Speaker: Order. I am very tolerant generally, but the hon. Gentleman was out of order.

Mr. Rooker: Will the Minister confirm that for the overwhelming majority of student unions the amount of public support for their activities is sometimes only one fifth or one sixth of their total expenditure? Will the Minister join me in welcoming the work of student unions in welfare, counselling and job finding? Will he take it from me that, having made nearly 20 visits to universities this year, I found that not one Vice-Chancellor had a bad word to say about the running of the student union in his university?

Given the obvious stress that many students are under and the many tragedies that we have read and heard about this year, should not this work be better supported? Would not the Minister do better to ignore the bile and spite from the duds on the Conservative Back Benches, and take a positive view and give a firm commitment that the Government will not publish consultation papers during either the recess of the House or that of the universities?

Mr. Boswell: The hon. Gentleman seems to have got out of bed on the wrong side today. I am surprised at the language he has used. I am equally surprised at his apparent wilful failure to recognise the importance of the principle of voluntary membership, the importance of proper accountability for public funds and, not least, the vital importance of avoiding victimisation of individuals. The hon. Gentleman, in his consultations, may not have heard about some of the things that have taken place in the past. If he has heard about them, I hope that he will not condone them. In return, I will concede one point: we recognise through our consultations the importance of proper services for students, and our proposals, when they are announced, will reflect that fact.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Will my hon. Friend confirm that a great deal of money could be saved if paid student sabbaticals for officers of student unions were ended and if the presidents of student unions did that job without pay or a sabbatical, as they always used to?

Mr. Boswell: I recall that in the days when I was a president of my college junior common room I received no remuneration for it. That should essentially be a matter for the student union and the institution. I have heard my hon. Friend's trenchant comments and I can assure him that the voluntary principle will make these matters much more accountable to the student body as a whole.

Primary Schools (Class Sizes)

4. **Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the percentage change in the number of primary schoolchildren being taught in classes of more than 40 between 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Forth: Twenty-four.

Mr. Byers: Is the Minister concerned that there has been a 24 per cent. increase in just one year in the number of primary school children being taught in classes of more than 40 and that thousands of primary school children are in that position? Will the Minister accept that, at a time of rising primary school population, we will need to employ more teachers to stop things getting even worse? Can he tell the House whether the Chief Secretary to the Treasury is likely to agree to such extra spending? Will he accept that when a teacher stands before a class of 40 10-year-olds, one is talking not about a valuable learning process but crowd control?

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman is making heavy weather of this. Yes, the figure has gone from rather a few to very few, but we are talking about 225 classes out of 137,000, or 11 pupils out of more than 3·5 million. That gives the House some idea of the proportions. The reality is that most of those classes are not representative even of the schools that reported them. The interesting point is that, at the same time, those schools also have one or more small classes. It must be a matter, rightly, for schools and authorities to decide the distribution of their teaching resources within schools. That is where the decision should be made. I am satisfied that the resources are there for class sizes. The average primary class size now is 26·4 pupils compared with 25·9 as long ago as 1979. It is not a cause for the sort of concern that the hon. Gentleman has expressed.

Mr. Pawsey: The concern expressed by the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) about children and class sizes would carry more weight if he would join Conservative Members in condemning the irresponsible acts of trade unions in boycotting tests.

Mr. Forth: That must be the case. We are concerned consistently with achieving and maintaining the highest possible standards in education. I sometimes wonder whether Opposition Members share that concern, given the fact that even now we believe, but we are not sure, that many Opposition Members supported the teachers' boycott. I should be glad to hear that confirmed by the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman today.

Mr. Jamieson: Is the Minister aware that the implication of an answer that he gave recently to my hon. Friend the Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) is that there are 500,000 children in state schools in this country in classes of 41 or more? Has the Minister had time to read an article by David Woodhead, who is a national director of the Independent Schools Information Service? He says——

Madam Speaker: Order. I cannot allow the hon. Gentleman to quote directly during Question Time.

Mr. Jamieson: Has the Minister had time to read the article in this magazine—[HON. MEMBERS: "Which one?"] The magazine from the Independent Schools Information Service. Will the Minister note that the article says quite clearly that the size of classes is important for children's education? Is the Minister saying that Mr. Woodhead is wrong or right?

Mr. Forth: The original premise of the hon. Gentleman's question was wrong; and not yet.

Grant-maintained Schools

5. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment has been made of the advice given to head teachers by local education authorities in relation to ballots on grant-maintained status for schools.

The Secretary of State for Education (Mr. John Patten): I am not aware of any general advice given to head teachers by local education authorities in relation to ballots on self-governing status.

I am aware, however, that Merton LEA has written to heads, telling them that they owe what is referred to as "a duty of loyalty" to their employer and suggesting that to be seen actively to be in conflict with the policies of their employer would put an employee at risk of breaching that obligation. That is nonsense.

I deplore action from any quarter that might be construed as intimidating heads, deputy heads or teachers or as muzzling their freedom of expression.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: Will my right hon. Friend recognise that there is all the difference in the world between impartial advice issued by local authorities to head teachers and the flagrant political pressure, to which he referred, from Labour councils such as Merton, implying that loyalty to the authority takes precedence over choice for parents and pupils?

Mr. Patten: The decision whether to go for grant-maintained status is one for governors and parents. It is undoubtedly their choice, not one for the local education authority. I hope that the London borough of Merton will soon join London boroughs such as Wandsworth, Sutton and Hillingdon, half of whose secondary pupils are already being educated in grant-maintained schools. That is the future for Merton and boroughs like it.

Ms Short: Will the Secretary of State also deplore the actions of teachers organising opt-out ballots who intimidate and pressurise children to get their parents to vote as those teachers require? What view does he take of schools organising opt-out ballots when they have a massive over-provision of places, as in the case of George Dixon school in my constituency which is chosen by very few parents, in order to prevent Birmingham rationalising its over-provision of places?

Mr. Patten: The way in which Birmingham local education authority treated the head of the school during the ballot to which the hon. Lady referred was absolutely disgraceful. That is why in the Education Bill presently in another place we have moved swiftly to ensure that there is a level playing field so that both sides can put their arguments fairly about whether a school should become grant maintained. More than 900 schools have now voted yes to grant-maintained status, and about 350,000 pupils are already being educated in grant-maintained schools in England as a whole.

Mr. Dunn: Given that local education authorities controlled by Opposition socialist parties are declaring their hostility to the concept of grant-maintained status, is not it time that we introduced legislation to require schools to opt in to local education authority control instead of opting out?

Mr. Patten: We have done so in an amendment to the Education Bill. My hon. Friend is a stalwart supporter of grant-maintained schools and he will know that the Bill will ensure that every school in the land shall once a year consider whether to go for grant-maintained status. It is very important that every year governors give parents the opportunity to vote in favour of grant-maintained status.

Dr. Wright: Would the Minister like to congratulate the parents at the Church of England primary school attended by my children who yesterday discovered that they had succeeded overwhelmingly in rejecting grant-maintained status? Will he further admit that the exercise of balloting in such primary schools is a monstrous waste of time for head teachers, teachers and parents and that it is causing discord and division throughout the school community? Will he now get on with the education tasks in hand?

Mr. Patten: As I said, some 900 schools have voted yes to grant-maintained status. It is a right of parents to vote in favour. Since the process began, eight out of 10 schools in which ballots are held vote firmly in favour of grant-maintained status.

Further and Higher Education

6. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what targets the Government have set for the number of students entering further and higher education by the end of the decade.

Mr. Boswell: The public expenditure plans announced by my right hon. Friend last November assumed that the proportion of young people entering higher education—which is now well over one in four—would remain broadly constant over the next three years. The plans also provided for the number of students in further education to increase by 25 per cent. over the next three years.

Mr. Jenkin: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that response. Will he confirm that he intends to ensure that any reduction in tuition fees that a particular institution may suffer will be matched by an increase in the block grant and will he assure the House that he does not intend the process of consolidation in pupil numbers to put undue strain on institutions such as the university of Essex, in my constituency, which have hitherto planned for growth?

Mr. Boswell: I thank my hon. Friend for his question. He will appreciate that we operate through the funding councils in the several countries of the United Kingdom, but I can confirm that, in making their funding dispositions, those bodies have had regard to the need for stability of the individual institutions. I also confirm that reductions in tuition fees for band 1 students have been exactly matched by an increase in the overall block grant. What is happening represents no more than a reorganisation of the system of payment to deal with the problems where students are taken on at the margin.

Mr. Bryan Davies: But does the Secretary of State accept that unless there is a change of Government—for which the country hopes and yearns—by the end of the decade, students at that time will be able to look forward to pursuing their courses in poverty in order to train for a life of poverty and unemployment under a Tory Administration, as present students do?

Mr. Boswell: All that I can say to the hon. Gentleman, who goes back quite a long way, is that he might examine the record of the Labour Government, which he will remember. The fact is that the real amount of money available to the individual student—the total resources—is exactly comparable with what was available when the Government came to power in 1979. Since then, student numbers have risen from one in eight of the population to between one in three and one in four. The hon. Gentleman may want to be an elitist, but I do not. We are offering higher education to a greater proportion of our young people than have ever taken part in it; that will be of great value to the nation and will stand young people in good stead in their future careers.

Education Reforms

7. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to visit schools in Norwich to discuss education reforms.

Mr. Patten: My ministerial colleagues and I have visited more than 120 schools since taking office.

I and other Ministers from the Department are continuing our programme of visits to schools across England to hear the views of teachers and governors at first hand and we hope that this programme may include Norwich in due course. It is an oversight that we have not been there yet.

Mr. Thompson: When my right hon. Friend has the opportunity to visit Norwich, he will find approval for his determination to reform teacher training, a reform which has been long overdue since some of the trendy nostrums of the 1960s and beyond. His emphasis on subject knowledge, on practical skills and on discipline in the classroom must be the right way forward. Does my right hon. Friend also accept the need for particular emphasis on the training of primary school teachers, as their job is in many respects difficult, challenging and possibly undervalued?

Mr. Patten: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend and I respect his views because, as I remember, he was a classroom teacher for more than 20 years. The reforms proposed for initial primary teacher training in the consultation document issued last week concentrate on a number of important things. The first is the need for less theory and more practice; the second is to ensure that student teachers spend more time concentrating on the basic core subjects; the third is to ensure that they are given much more help in maintaining discipline in the classroom.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: When the Secretary of State is discussing the so-called reforms in Norwich or elsewhere, will he apologise for his appalling proposals to dilute the professionalism of teachers in our schools by introducing a semi-trained mums' army? That proposal is again uniting parents and teachers against the Government. Does not the Secretary of State recognise the critical importance of education in the early years and the fact that if things go wrong at that stage they may never be put right? Does not the right hon. Gentleman recognise that the highest possible level of professionalism is required for the unique responsibility of introducing our children to formal education? Is he really seeking more confrontation?

Mr. Patten: That was a laundry list of complaints. With regard to the consultation document, the hon. Lady has overlooked entirely that we wish to bring into the profession a greater diversity of people from a wider range of backgrounds, including parents, who have experience in dealing with and educating young children. Many parents who wish to help with the teaching of five to seven-year-olds have good-quality A-levels and much experience in bringing up children. It is exactly such people that we want to bring into primary teaching.

Staying-on Rates

8. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on staying-on rates at 16 years.

Mr. Boswell: I greatly welcome the increase in the participation rate of 16-year-olds in schools and colleges—up to 80 per cent. in the current year in England, compared with 56 per cent. in 1979-80. Our expenditure plans for further education will give a further substantial boost to participation, lifting us towards the top of the international league table in staying-on rates for 16 to 19-year-olds within the next three years.

Sir Michael Neubert: Is my hon. Friend aware that, as a result of this welcome rapid and long-overdue increase in the number of 16-year-olds in Havering staying on at school, the new sixth form college is short of full capacity? In the circumstances, would not it be good sense to allow the grant-maintained Frances Bardsley girls' school in my constituency to keep its sixth form and, at the same time, maintain diversity of parental choice, including the opportunity of single-sex education for girls up to the age of 18?

Mr. Boswell: I can confirm that all Ministers in my Department are interested in the great themes of diversity, choice and quality in the provision of education in schools and colleges just as much after the age of 16 as before the compulsory leaving age. My hon. Friend will appreciate that I cannot comment on the specific set of proposals concerning the Frances Bardsley school, but I will ensure that these are carefully considered by my right hon. Friend. Of course, any representations made by my hon. Friend, or by any other hon. Member or interested party, will be considered most closely.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Is not the sight of the Minister preening himself while firmly burying his head in the ground intriguing? Why does he not address the facts? According to the Audit Commission, between 30 and 40 per cent. of 16-year-olds who entered further education courses this year will not succeed and fewer than two in five of our 18-year-olds are still in education. By any measure, Britain lags behind the rest of the industrialised world. What does the Minister intend to do about it?

Mr. Boswell: I might start by giving the hon. Gentleman some basic knowledge of anatomy. It would be quite difficult for even the highly skilled team on this Bench to preen themselves while burying their heads in the sand. However, I shall leave aside that minor infelicity and deal with the substance of the hon. Gentleman's remarks.

My right hon. and hon. Friends and I have said that we are by no means happy with the level of drop-out from further education or other post-16 provision or with the

educational standards of those involved in that process. We are very grateful to those, including the adult literacy and basic skills unit, who have helped to expose the deficiencies. We are anxious to repair those deficiencies, just as we are tackling the staying-on rate, to which I have referred. I hope that the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues will support our proposals for the national curriculum and the testing regime, as the deficiencies should be tackled at source and not left to the stage of post-16 provision.

Mr. Devlin: Is not it the case that, hand in hand with the increased staying-on rate at age 16 goes the 35 per cent. increase in the number of students attaining a first degree in the past 10 years? Is not that a truly tremendous achievement, brought about by the Government and something which deserves praise at every turn?

Mr. Boswell: My hon. Friend is entirely right; it is a great achievement and deserves praise, although it rarely gets it from the Opposition.

Grant-maintained Schools

9. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many staff in his Department he intends shall be mainly occupied in dealing with grant-maintained schools; and where they will be located.

Mr. Robin Squire: There are currently 145 Department staff dealing mainly with grant-maintained schools policy, of whom around 95 are based in Darlington and the remainder in London. The total is likely to increase to some 250 to 300, with most of the increase taking place in Darlington and York, before the transfer of certain responsibilities to the Funding Agency for Schools in April 1994. Thereafter, Department for Education staffing will reduce.

Mr. Beith: But is not what is being built up here—in the Department and then the funding agency—just another bureaucracy, which will be further away from the schools, which is not accountable to the local electorate and which schools have no opportunity to opt back out of? Does the Minister agree that it is not therefore so surprising that the large majority of schools show no sign of wanting to go for grant-maintained status and prefer to stick with the devil they know?

Mr. Squire: As the right hon. Gentleman has already heard from the Dispatch Box this afternoon, the number of schools applying is nearing 1,000 and we expect that figure to be reached before the end of the year. Let me make it clear to the right hon. Gentleman that grant-maintained schools are self-governing and are not run from Whitehall. More important, those schools, by their very nature, are bringing decisions closer to parents, teachers and local people. I am surprised that a party that used to claim that it was in favour of developing power is now so opposed to the concept.

Mrs. Lait: Does my hon. Friend agree that some special schools such as George Rainey school in my constituency would benefit from grant-maintained status as set out in the Education Bill that is now in the other place? Will he assure me that staff at the Department for Education and the Funding Agency for Schools will do everything in their power to help those schools to opt out in the difficult circumstances in which they find themselves?

Mr. Squire: My hon. Friend will understand if I say that all cases will be assessed on their merits. I am certain that most schools in the country would benefit from moving to grant-maintained status, as those that have already done it have found.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: How many officials in the Department will be involved in allocating budget for grant-maintained schools? Is the Minister aware that one of the consequences of schools opting into centralised control is that some grant-maintained schools still do not know their budget for the current financial year and therefore cannot plan staffing levels of curriculum development? Is not it a sign of the Government's incompetence that grant-maintained schools have to complain to the Labour party that this Government cannot set their budget properly?

Mr. Squire: The only thing that the House is awaiting from the hon. Lady is a clear statement of her party's attitude to grant-maintained schools. We heard at the last election that she planned to abolish them. It will be interesting to discover whether we have to wait another couple of years to find out whether that will still be Labour's policy at the next election.

Mr. Bellingham: Is the Minister aware that, in the past few weeks, I have visited a number of grant-maintained schools in my constituency and that all of them pointed out to me the fact that the service that they were receiving from the GMS unit at Darlington was absolutely first-class —that nothing was too much effort for it? Will my hon. Friend ignore the nonsense spoken by the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) and pass on our gratitude to his officials?

Mr. Squire: I am delighted that my hon. Friend found that his schools have had excellent experiences. All hon. Members visiting grant-maintained schools across the country will find that they have a better atmosphere and are enthusiastic. I urge hon. Members who have not yet taken advantage of opportunities to make such visits to do so.

National Vocational Qualifications

10. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will estimate the number of students accepted for NVQ courses who have withdrawn for financial reasons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: This information is not collected centrally. However, we have no evidence to suggest that withdrawals are a major problem. NVQs are normally taken by people already in employment and tax relief is available to help meet the cost of course fees.

Mr. Kirkwood: I am grateful to the Minister for that answer. I am also grateful for the announcement, made yesterday in a written reply, that increased money had been put into access funds for the current financial year. But that answer made it clear that only £4·6 million was being made available for further education access funds. Does the Minister believe, having regard to the downward pressure that central Government are exerting on local

authority discretionary education budgets, that that fund of money will be enough to give national vocational qualifications to those qualified enough to have access to courses?

Mr. Boswell: First, may I make two brief points of qualification relating to the hon. Gentlemans' remarks. The first is that the announcement related to England. The second is that his assertion that the Government are putting downward pressure on the level of money available for discretionary awards is not the case. We continue to fund them. The incidents, effects and current practice of discretionary awards are now being considered by two independent foundations which will report shortly.

Sir Giles Shaw: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the NVQ award system is of great importance to employers and local industry and forms a clear relationship between the education system and the craft system of old? Will he ensure that every encouragement is given to NVQ awards in the development of his education policy?

Mr. Boswell: Yes and yes.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 June.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Chisholm: What progress did the Prime Minister make at his meeting this morning in rewriting his election manifesto and rewriting the rules on invalidity benefit? In particular, will he say who else he intends to exclude from invalidity benefit, apart from the retired builder with heart disease mentioned in the leaked document? Will he also say why on earth those still receiving it should have to pay, through benefit cuts, for the Government's unsurpassed economic incompetence?

The Prime Minister: We were not rewriting our manifesto this morning. We were reviewing invalidity benefit and it would be irresponsible of us not to do so.

Mr. Viggers: I am grateful for the chance of hearing my right hon. Friend's comments. Does he agree that our troops in the former Yugoslavia have done an exceptionally difficult job with great skill and courage and that they have consistently carried out the policy of distributing humanitarian aid for as long as it has been possible for them to do so? Does he further agree that the person to emerge from the recent crisis with the least credibility is the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), who demanded further troop deployments and then immediately demanded that they be pulled out—*[Interruption.]*

The Prime Minister: I must first congratulate my hon. Friend on his narrow escape and his capacity to swim. We are delighted to see him here today. He is right to say that British forces are doing an outstanding job in a dangerous situation. They are inevitably running risks as the difficulties on the ground become more serious. I wish to ensure that those risks are kept to a minimum and I assure the House that the necessary contingency plans exist should there be a further deterioration in the situation. As my hon. Friend intimated, I believe that the policy that we have followed in Bosnia has been right and any other policy would have been reckless of the lives of British soldiers.

Mr. John Smith: What changes in the law is the Prime Minister considering with regard to the disclosure of secret donations to political parties, given the continuing scandal over the £1·5 million donated to the Conservative party by Mr. Asil Nadir?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman may occasionally care to comment on some of the people who may in the past have donated money to his party—*[Interruption.]* I have no present proposals for changes in the law.

Mr. John Smith: Why does the Prime Minister refuse to introduce legislation requiring the public disclosure of all substantial donations made to all political parties, so that the political parties that receive them have to declare them? In addition to putting political contributions on an open and honest basis, would not that also prevent the breaches of company law which occurred in the case of Mr. Nadir, whose companies apparently made seven illegal donations amounting to £440,000 to the Conservative party?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows, the requirement to declare company donations to political parties under the Companies Act falls on the directors of the donor company, not on the recipient. He is wrong in his later comments—the payment itself would not be unlawful. Only the failure to declare it in the company accounts would be unlawful and that is a matter for the company, not the recipient.

Mr. John Smith: Does not the Prime Minister understand that, if the Conservative party had had to disclose the payment, the breach would have been revealed when the company acted illegally? Does he not realise that he cannot sweep the matter under the carpet and that there are people in the United Kingdom who believe that it is wrong that political parties should be financed in a furtive way or by excessively large donations from those who are not prepared to be publicly identified? Those are the words of concerned members of the Conservative party. Why cannot he act in this matter to get a level playing field that will encourage honesty and equality?

The Prime Minister: Donations to the Conservative party are freely offered and they are accepted on that basis, unlike the way in which so much is donated to the Labour party.

Mr. Garnier: Will my right hon. Friend welcome the visit of the President of Azerbaijan later this month and confirm that it underlines the strong diplomatic links between our two countries and confirms the existence of strong commercial links to the mutual benefit of our two countries?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I certainly share the view expressed by my hon. Friend. There is no doubt that there are huge markets opening up in that part of the world which I believe will be satisfactory for the United

Kingdom, provided that we are prepared to take an interest in them at an early stage. Undoubtedly, we are prepared to take that interest and I very much welcome the vist here.

Q2. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Canavan: What exactly is the Prime Minister going to do now that Lady Thatcher has effectively given him the kiss of death, Asil Nadir is overtaking him in the opinion polls and Sir Bernard Ingham tells us that the Tory party is behaving like a headless chicken? If the party is too chicken to take the necessary steps—*[Interruption.]*—would not it be more honourable for heads to roll voluntarily and let the people decide on a fresh menu?

The Prime Minister: More rehearsal needed, I think.

Mr. Dover: Has the Prime Minister noticed that, during the recession, the private sector has frozen wages and earnings, reduced earnings on many occasions and had massive job reductions? Are not there lessons to be learnt by the public sector, especially if the burden on the private sector is not to continue increasing?

The Prime Minister: I believe that the private sector has taken dramatic action in order to keep its costs down. The implications of that are now being seen in the extent to which many companies are now recovering. As far as the public sector is concerned, as my hon. Friend knows, we have held strict control over public sector wages over the past year.

Mr. Hoon: Last week, the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont) suggested that the Prime Minister ordered interest rate cuts for purely political reasons against the advice and better judgment of his then Chancellor of the Exchequer. Is that true?

The Prime Minister: It is not what my right hon. Friend said and it is not so.

Q3. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Jenkin: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that a further 1·8 million people so far have registered an interest in applying for the third British Telecom share flotation? Is not that the clearest evidence possible that, far from running out of steam, the British people cannot get enough popular capitalism?

The Prime Minister: I believe that my hon. Friend is right about that. Today, almost one in four adults owns shares compared with about one in 20 a decade or so ago. People want to build up a stake in Britain. They want to own a part of it. That is very much part of our philosophy and we will continue to encourage it.

Q4. **Mr. Davidson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Davidson: Will the Prime Minister accept my delayed but sincere congratulations on his decision to sack his Chancellor of the Exchequer? Will he come to Govan soon, while he is still Prime Minister, and tell the people there that he will sack any Minister who proposes a drastic reduction in the already inadequate level of invalidity benefit?

The Prime Minister: As I indicated earlier to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Chisholm), we are considering invalidity benefit and I believe that it is entirely right that we should do so. Expenditure on invalidity benefit has risen from about £1·5 billion 10 years ago to more than £6 billion this year. No responsible Government could ignore an increase of that order. We have a duty to consider whether all that taxpayers' money is being wisely spent. The number of people receiving invalidity benefit has more than doubled during the past 10 years from 700,000 to more than 1·5 million. Frankly, it beggars belief that so many more people have suddenly become invalids, especially at a time when the health of the population has improved. I make no apologies for looking at this area of expenditure.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: When my right hon. Friend goes to the European Council meeting in Copenhagen, will he take the opportunity to impress on our partners that all of us in Europe operate in an intensely competitive international market and that the costs of bureaucratic regulation, particularly the social chapter, represent a severe disadvantage to Europe's competitiveness in world markets?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I undertake to raise that matter at the European Council at the weekend. The president of the European Employers Federation recently appealed to Community employment and social affairs Ministers to

"stop taking measures which unnecessarily destroy jobs".

I agree with that. I have made it clear in the past. I believe that the social chapter falls into that category and I shall reiterate that view at the European Council meeting this weekend. It is not just a problem for the United Kingdom. All of Europe is facing increasing competition from Japan, the Pacific basin and the United States. Unless all Europe keeps its costs down, we shall not create jobs, but export them.

Q5. **Mr. Hanson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hanson: When the Prime Minister visited Wales last week did he have a chance to see the report showing that in the last year of the Labour Government family incomes in Wales were 87 per cent. of those in southern England, whereas in the first year of his premiership those incomes fell to 64 per cent. of those in southern England? Is that a record to be proud of? How, tell me, will the abolition of the wages councils help to improve that situation?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman in his litany unexpectedly neglected to mention that in recent years unemployment in his constituency has fallen by 49 per

cent. That is because of this Government's policies. It will probably fall even further as a result of the abolition of wages councils, which themselves cost jobs.

Mr. Heald: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the proposed European Community ban on large engined motor cycles, which would have damaged the British Triumph, has been successfully resisted by the Government? Will he accept the congratulations of motor cyclists throughout the country, including the North Herts Motor Cycle Action Group, on that achievement? Does he agree that that achievement will enable the British Triumph motor cycle to be successful throughout the world, knocking spots off the opposition, something which my right hon. Friend has done since he became Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: I can confirm to my hon. Friend that the Government received a derogation from a Community directive relating to motor cycle engine size. That has had some beneficial effects for the United Kingdom and it means that our industry can continue to sell motor cycles with a large engine in the United Kingdom until at least the start of the next century. That is excellent news for Triumph and British motor cyclists. I am delighted at that outcome.

Q6. **Mr. Pope:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Pope: Does the Prime Minister recall the recommendation last year from the Select Committee on Health that maternity services should be community based and close to a woman's home? How does the Prime Minister square that with the decision to close the maternity unit at the Accrington Victoria hospital in my constituency? He claims to be a listening Prime Minister; when will he listen to the women in my constituency who want their maternity unit kept open?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to take up his particular constituency point with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health, I am sure that she would be prepared to listen to him.

Points of Order

3.30 pm

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Do you have any information about an impending statement from the Prime Minister about his answer to me contained in Monday's edition of the *Official Report*, at column 433, that Downing street office costs have trebled since 1981? What sort of example is that to the old and those on invalidity——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not raise arguments with me. The answer is no, I have not received any such information. That was a most bogus point of order, and I hope that other hon. Members will not follow that example, because the House is getting very weary of such points of order.

Ms Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Given that the Department of Transport has today published its plan for the first private toll road, the northern Birmingham relief road, will you make inquiries about the circumstances under which the environmental assessment, which goes with the statement of plans, could be placed in the Library of the House so that hon. Members could have an opportunity to take on board the environmental considerations, which are most important?

Madam Speaker: I think that the hon. Lady might take that up with the Department herself.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I suspect that this is a genuine point of order. Will you please rule that, when the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) is standing to your right, with his back up against the Box where the civil servants sit, he should not participate in the debate by haranguing and shouting at Members on the Front Bench or anyone else in the House, since he is outside the confines of the House and, as a Government Whip, he should, of course, not say anything?

Madam Speaker: That is almost a genuine point of order, because I find that many hon. Members, who are outside the confines of the Chamber, are also doing a lot of shouting when Front Bench spokesmen are at the Dispatch Box. I hope that that will cease from now.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Madam Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

PARALYTIC SHELLFISH POISONING

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning) (No. 3) Order 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 1476) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning) (No. 4) Order 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 1483) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

DRUG TRAFFICKING (PROCEEDS)

That the draft Confiscation of the Proceeds of Drug Trafficking (Designated Countries and Territories) (Scotland) Amendment Order 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

OVERSEAS FORFEITURE ORDERS

That the draft Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Act 1990 (Enforcement of Overseas Forfeiture Orders) (Scotland) Amendment Order 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Question agreed to.

National Health Services (Amendment)

3.33 pm

Mr. Mike Hall (Warrington, South): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to make further provision as to the functions of Family Health Services Authorities in relation to the rights of general practitioners' patients; and to amend section 20 of and Schedule 7 to the National Health Service Act 1977 to ensure that such patients are consulted by Family Health Services Authorities when substantial variations are proposed to their medical services.

The need for the Bill arose because of recent events that took place on the Windmill Hill estate in the Runcorn part of my constituency. Those events demonstrate the ineffectiveness of both the Department of Health and the patients charter to protect the interests of the general public.

On 29 April 1993, the doctor's surgery that serves the Windmill Hill estate district of my constituency was closed, and 703 patients of Dr. O'Connor were given only five days' notice of the decision. They were confronted by the news that they had only five days to find another general practitioner.

A number of my constituents in that district are elderly, a number of them are disabled and some of them are both. The district contains many families with young children who live on the estate. The decision to close the local doctor's surgery meant that they would now have to travel even further to the nearest general practitioner.

It will be a difficult journey for a number of my constituents, for a number of reasons. First, there is an inadequate bus service to the next doctor's surgery, and many of my constituents are not car owners, which means that they will have to walk the two miles to the doctor's surgery through open park land, which, when the climate is bad, will mean a difficult journey. It will mean that, every time that those constituents need to see a general practitioner, they will have to make the journey on foot to and from their doctor's surgery.

The provision of locally based general practitioners and their surgeries is a fundamental and essential part of proper care in the community. Indeed, it is probably the starting point of care in the community, but my constituents have had the facilities at that starting point removed. My constituents' reaction to the decision was one of anger that they had not even been consulted by the family health services authority. They were anxious that the provision of services to them was to be removed, and they were concerned that the level of health service provision in that part of Runcorn would be diminished.

It is the role of the family health services authority to consult on such issues, but it did not consult my constituents. It did not even give them warning that the decision was on the way. It simply sent them a curt circular letter telling them to find themselves another general practitioner within five days. It gave a list of the surgeries which my constituents could use. My constituents were not asked whether or why—they were not consulted, but were told what they would have to do. The decision had an immediate impact on the services of the local hospital.

A number of my constituents said that they were unable to find a doctor's surgery within five days and that if something was wrong with them they would go to Halton general hospital for their medical needs. I was confronted by my constituents on the day that the decision was taken and I promised them that I would raise the matter in the House of Commons in any way I could.

I raised the issue during business questions, and asked for a statement, but was told that, as I had informed the Department of Health that day, I would be receiving a letter. I tried unsuccessfully to catch your eye, Madam Speaker, at Health questions, but was unable to do so. I now have the opportunity of the ten-minute Bill procedure to raise the issue on the Floor of the House.

When I realised that my constituents had been presented with a fait accompli, I was not sure what to do, as I had already raised the issue with the Department of Health. I turned to that champion of citizens' rights, the citizens charter, published in July 1991. Page 5 states:

"The public sector should provide choice wherever practicable. The people affected by services should be consulted. Their views about the services they use should be sought regularly and systematically to inform decisions about what services should be provided".

Page 10 of the document states:

"Health Authorities must seek local citizens' views on their services."

I also looked at the patients charter, as I thought that it might provide back-up and further instructions from the Government. In the foreword to the patients charter, the then Secretary of State for Health wrote:

"The Government is also firmly committed to improving the Service—to creating a better National Health Service. This means a Service that:

—always puts the patient first, providing services that meet clearly defined national and local standards, in ways that are responsive to people's views and needs."

I was encouraged by those words, which seemed to give me hope that the views of my constituents on the Windmill Hill estate, who had not then been consulted about the removal of their medical services, would be entitled to have their voices heard.

The Government's commitment in the citizens charter and the patients charter led me to contact the Department of Health to seek its intervention, even at such a late stage, to ensure that my constituents were provided with the adequate medical facilities that they wanted in their locality. It was their view that the surgery should stay open, and that view was in line with the views expressed in the citizens charter and with the supposed rights contained therein.

Unfortunately, I need to present the Bill because the response by the Department of Health was less than adequate. I was advised in writing by the Secretary of State for Health that the legal position on matters of this kind is that the Cheshire family health services authority should consult the Halton community health council about the proposed closure of the doctor's surgery on Windmill hill.

The Minister further advised me that the decision about whether to replace the outgoing doctor rested with the medical practices committee, which is an independent public body. The Minister stated that that committee bases its decisions on reports from the family health services authority, following its consultation with the community health council. The letter stated:

"The decision of whether to dispense or advertise a vacancy is a matter entirely for the Medical Practices Committee and is not subject to Ministerial intervention."

The Minister said that the Cheshire family health services authority had been consulted about the closure of the doctor's surgery on Windmill hill, and that the legal procedures had been followed. That means that the hopes

[Mr. Mike Hall]

and aspirations contained in the citizens charter, which were said to be at the heart of Government policy in the 1990s, have not materialised, and that the views of my constituents have been totally ignored.

In terms of the National Health Service Act 1977, the promises in the citizens charter and the patients charter to consult people affected by services counts for nothing. Even if the Government wanted to act in this case, they would be prevented from doing so by current legislation. If that legislation remains unamended, the citizens charter and the patients charter are merely expensive paper tigers. They will remain a political gesture which, when put to the test, will be shown to have no teeth and no means of effecting the change that they desire.

That is another example of the Government failing to deliver their promises to the people and of people being misled into believing that the citizens charter is something that it is not.

The matter that I raise is not an isolated incident, because doctors' surgeries are being closed throughout constituencies. My hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) raised the problem 12 months ago in the House. He was told the legal position, which means that the citizens charter counts for nothing in such cases.

In the light of such events, the 1977 Act needs to be changed. My constituents in Windmill hill deserve to have their views heard, and they are entitled to the minimum consultation about their family needs for health service provision in Runcorn.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Mike Hall, Mr. Neil Gerrard, Ms Ann Coffey, Mr. Colin Pickthall, Ms Estelle Morris, Mr. Jim Dowd, Mrs. Bridget Prentice, Mr. David Hanson, Mr. John Heppell, Mr. Greg Pope, Mr. Doug Hoyle and Ms Janet Anderson.

National Health Services (Amendment)

Mr. Mike Hall accordingly presented a Bill to make further provision as to the functions of Family Health Services Authorities in relation to the rights of general practitioners' patients; and to amend section 20 of and Schedule 7 to the National Health Service Act 1977 to ensure that such patients are consulted by Family Health Services Authorities when substantial variations are proposed to their medical services; And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a second time upon Friday 2 July, and to be printed. [Bill 203.]

Orders of the Day

Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill

Lords amendments considered.
Lords amendments Nos. 1 to 7 agreed to.

New Clause

ACTION SHORT OF DISMISSAL: NON-INFRINGING ACTIONS

Lords amendment: No. 8, before clause 13, to insert the following new Clause—

(". In section 148 of the 1992 Act (consideration of complaint of action short of dismissal), after subsection (2) there shall be inserted—

"(3) In determining what was the purpose for which action was taken by the employer against the complainant in a case where—

(a) there is evidence that the employer's purpose was to further a change in his relationship with all or any class of his employees, and

(b) there is also evidence that his purpose was one falling within section 146,

the tribunal shall regard the purpose mentioned in paragraph (a) (and not the purpose mentioned in paragraph (b)) as the purpose for which the employer took the action, unless it considers that the action was such as no reasonable employer would take having regard to the purpose mentioned in paragraph (a).

(4) Where the action which the tribunal determines to have been the action taken against the complainant was action taken in consequence of previous action by the employer paragraph (a) of subsection (3) is satisfied if the purpose mentioned in that paragraph was the purpose of the previous action.

(5) In subsection (3) "class", in relation to an employer and his employees, means those employed at a particular place of work, those employees of a particular grade, category or description or those of a particular grade, category or description employed at a particular place of work.".")

3.45 pm

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. David Hunt): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

I shall commence by making two important points. First, I shall explain how the amendment will restore to the law the meaning that it was intended to have before two recent Court of Appeal cases. Secondly, I strongly reaffirm that the law must protect all employees from any action by their employer that is designed to force them to give up membership of, or to join, a trade union. Against the background of those two important points I shall seek to put the record straight, in the light of some recent comments, which were based on a number of misconceptions.

During the debate, it is important for all hon. Members to differentiate between the right to belong to a trade union and that of collective bargaining. Trade union membership must not be confused with the law and practice relating to collective bargaining, and I hope to explain why.

Amendment No. 8 concerns the law on action short of dismissal, which is contained in section 146 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992, but dates back to the legislation of a previous Labour Government, and that aspect of the law has not been changed since 1975.

Section 146 protects employees against action by their employer that is intended to deter or compel the employee either to become or to cease to be a trade union member. That is why I stressed at the outset that the Government believe that the decision whether to be a member of a trade union must be a matter of free choice for the employee. Once again, I reiterate that employees ought to be protected against any action by their employer that is designed to force them either to be, or not to be, union members.

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): I am grateful to the Secretary of State for giving way, and wonder how he feels about having this as his first job. Does his logic apply to Government Communications Headquarters, Cheltenham and if not, why not?

Mr. Hunt: I am delighted to have this as my first job, because I am explaining why that principle lies at the heart of the Government's stance on trade union legislation. Indeed, an examination of the Government's step-by-step approach, which has been so successful in transforming industrial relations, reveals that that principle has consistently lain at the heart of the Government's legislation, and I am happy to reaffirm it. Government Communications Headquarters, Cheltenham is a very different set of circumstances. The greatest challenge is for the Labour party to give that principle the same unequivocal support.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Why does the Minister, who claims to be a Tory wet, not have the guts to admit that the Government are all about allowing people to be members of a trade union but not to be effective members, so that they are unable to join with others to negotiate with employers? The truth is that the Government rattle on about a classless society, but they are going to give the bosses a chance to deduct wages from people who are members of a trade union, while the blue-eyed boys and girls will get more money. The whole thing stinks to high heaven.

Mr. Hunt: I am not prepared to join the hon. Gentleman in his own individual class war. Those days are fast and far behind us. What he looks back to are, in his words, the good old days; in my words, they are the bad old days of the 1960s and 1970s, when a few trade union leaders could dictate to the Government and we had the worst industrial relations record of any country in the world. The Government have transformed that bad industrial relations record into one in which everyone in the country can take pride. I am determined to stay wedded to the principles which brought that about.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Will the right hon. Gentleman answer the underlying point that has just been raised by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)? Is he not proposing a restriction of the exercise of the right of which he has just spoken—the right to be a member of a trade union? Will he explain to the House how it is not a breach of article 11 of the European convention on human rights to introduce that proposal?

Mr. Hunt: It is an interesting dimension to have Bolsover interpreted by Montgomeryshire. I do not think that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) needs any lessons from the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) on how to put his points.

Mr. Carlile: Answer the question.

Mr. Hunt: I shall come to his question, but I do not think that the hon. Member for Bolsover needs any lessons from those on the Bench behind him. In my experience in the House, the hon. Member for Bolsover has given many lessons back the other way to those on that Bench.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery has once again confused the two issues that I tried to caution the House not to confuse right at the outset—the principle of collective bargaining and the issue whether an individual has the right to belong to a trade union. If one can separate those two issues—*[Interruption.]* Will the hon. Gentleman allow me to respond to his point, instead of trying to be a barrack-room Commons lawyer, which he does not do very well?

It is very important not to confuse the issue of collective bargaining with that of trade union membership. That is why I can answer so vehemently the hon. and learned Gentleman's latter point. We are respecting the right of an individual to belong to a trade union of his or her choice and the right not to belong to a trade union.

Ms Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): The Secretary of State may be aware that, in my constituency, an employer called Arrowsmith issued new contracts to its work force, all of whom were members of a trade union. The contract specifically required that they were not to be members of a trade union. When they refused to give up their trade union membership, the employer sacked all 120 of them. Will the Secretary of State suggest what action they should take against an employer who is breaching the principle that he said he adheres to—the right to choose to be a member of a trade union?

Mr. Hunt: Any action taken by an employer which is designed to force an individual employee not to join a trade union or to give up trade union membership is contrary to section 146. I am happy to look at all the details of the contracts, but I think that the hon. Lady must be mistaken in two important respects. She must not confuse the question of collective bargaining, but it has always been possible for employers, under the law as it stood——

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Sir Michael Neubert (Romford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the problem is that those self-same unions that he mentioned in reply to the hon. Member for Bolsover, which disrupted and undermined good industrial relations back in the 1960s and 1970s, are still the essential support and financial prop of the Labour party today, which may account for them wanting to take all the day on this one issue?

Mr. Hunt: I gave way to my hon. Friend because I knew that he would make a good point, and he did not neglect to do so.

As I have explained on many occasions to many trade union colleagues of mine both now and in the past, it is important that the British trade union movement should give up its stranglehold on the Labour party. It undermines its case in industrial logic for seeking to cling on to its power over the Labour party.

It is important to recall that, as my hon. Friend's point bears out, it was not that long ago that Mr. John Edmonds, the leader of the GMB—Opposition Members

[Mr. Hunt]

may well shift uneasily in their seats when I remind them of this—said, "We pay for the Labour party, so we have a right to democracy in the Labour party." That point made by my hon. Friend is important. If the Labour party wishes to escape from the accusation——

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Hunt: I am answering the point. It may be embarrassing to hon. Members, but I am answering the point made by my hon. Friend.

If the Labour party wishes to escape from the accusation that it is a fully paid-up subsidiary of the trade union movement, it must take steps on this point.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Will you rule whether a discussion on links between the Labour party and the trade union movement has anything to do with the amendment?

Madam Speaker: A number of hon. Members who are questioning the Secretary of State are leading him down that road. If that is the case, he must reply. I am sure that we shall soon return to the amendment, so that other hon. Members who wish to speak will be able to do so.

Mr. Hunt: I feel strongly that it is time that the trade union movement gave up shouting that he who pays the piper calls the tune. *[Interruption.]* I know that it is uncomfortable, but I make this point. Mr. John Edmonds let the rat out of the bag. What he said is the true state of affairs in the nation today. Opposition Members are indeed spokesmen, spokespeople, spokespersons and spokes for the trade union movement. It is about time that they started to represent the real interests of union members rather than some trade union leaders.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hunt: Of course I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, then I shall return to the point made by the hon. Member for Bolsover.

Mr. Leighton: I know that this must be embarrassing for the Secretary of State, but will he please return to the point under discussion and not waffle round all these other matters? Let me try to clarify what he has said. Has he not said that he does not mind a worker holding a trade union card privately, but if that worker wants to use the facilities or good offices of the union—for example, by getting the branch secretary to write to his employer about wages or conditions—that worker can be penalised? Is that not the essence of the matter?

Mr. Hunt: I was trying to explain that that is not the case. For many years, I was a solicitor acting for a number of trade unions and for one in particular. I became aware of the importance of the trade union movement in areas other than collective bargaining. It has never been part of the trade union case that, without collective bargaining, there is no such thing as a trade union movment. The hon. Gentleman is confusing those two issues, which I pleaded with the House not to confuse in order to avoid a disjointed debate.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): What is the difference between Lords amendment No. 8 and the Union of Democratic Mineworkers receiving a bigger wage increase than the National Union of Mineworkers a few years ago, which we had to go to court to stop?

Mr. Hunt: I am making a point relating to union membership. It has always been possible for an employer to give an employee an incentive to engage in individual contracts rather than to negotiate through collective bargaining. The amendment seeks to take the law back to where people believed it was before the Court of Appeal cases. It is perfectly in order for an employer to negotiate directly with individual employees and to offer them an additional pay increase if they will negotiate on an individual basis. I can produce a number of comments made by Labour Ministers which clearly show that this provision was never intended to affect collective bargaining, which is the issue before us today.

I emphasise that the cases that have made the amendment necessary do not concern union membership: they arise as a result of employers wanting to change the methods by which they negotiate their employees' pay. It has always been generally understood and accepted that the statutory provisions with which we are concerned do not extend beyond issues of union membership, and certainly were not intended to cover collective bargaining.

4 pm

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey): I welcome the Secretary of State to the Dispatch Box and congratulate him on his appointment. As to the distinction that he appears to be drawing between membership of a trade union and actually using the good offices of that trade union, the employment appeal tribunal, under Mr. Justice Knox, considered this question and rejected it with the following words:

> "We find ourselves unconvinced of that distinction. In our judgement, the activities of a Trade Union officer in negotiating and elucidating terms of employment is, to use a prayer book expression, the outward and visible manifestation of Trade Union membership . . . and we see no genuine distinction between membership of a Union on the one hand and making use of essential services of a Union on the other."

Would the Secretary of State care to comment on that?

Mr. Hunt: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her kind words in welcoming me to the Dispatch Box.

The words that I would add are "not collective bargaining issues". I have already referred to this. In a debate in the other place on 23 September 1975, Lord Jacques, who was then a member of the Labour Government, when dealing with clause 45—which is now essentially clause 146—said:

> "Clause 45 deals with individual rights of employees, not collective bargaining issues."

It is important that we should bear that difference in mind. It is clear that it was the intention of the Labour Government in 1975, in introducing the provision, that the clause should deal with individual rights of employees and in circumstances with collective bargaining issues.

Lord Jacques went on to explain:

> "A prohibited action must be for the purpose of prevention, deterrence or penalisation. Actions aimed at other purposes, such as helping recognised unions, which have the incidental effect of restricting some employees' rights comparatively, do not infringe these rights."

Nothing could be clearer. It was on the basis of that understanding of the law that two separate companies,

Associated Newspapers and Associated British Ports, acted when they decided to change their negotiating arrangements.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that, when it came to the meat of the matter, Lord Jacques, for the Labour party, in the same debate said:

"The clause provides, negatively, that the employer must show tolerance and not prevent participation in union activities"?

On behalf of the right hon. Gentleman's party, Lord Gowrie—who some time later gave up being a Minister in the House of Lords because he could not get by on £33,000 a year—said:

"In dealing with individual rights, we were anxious that negative rights—the right not to be forced into doing things—should be part of such laws."

Lord Jacques said the alternative to passing the measure would mean that

"The individual employee has no rights to take part in any of his union's activities at work".—[*Official Report*, House of Lords, 23 September 1975; Vol. 364, c. 189-92.]

But this clause was passed, and they are so entitled.

Mr. Hunt: I shall savour this, as it may be the only occasion on which I agree with every word that the hon. Gentleman has said. I have those quotations at my disposal as well, because they prove my point, which is that this clause does not concern collective bargaining issues. Anybody who knows anything about trade union membership will know that many other benefits of such membership exist side by side with, but separate from, collective bargaining issues. That is an important point to make.

Another debate in the other place on 28 July 1982 again expresses the point that I am seeking to make. Earl Ferrers said:

"it would not be unfair to have a differentiation between rates of pay".

If one looks at the context in which he said that, one will see that the situation about which we are now talking has been thrown into considerable doubt by the two Court of Appeal cases.

When the companies that I have mentioned decided to change from collective bargaining to personal contracts and to reward those employees who agreed to accept personal contracts, they had every reason to believe that they were acting lawfully. They have made it clear throughout that they were in no way seeking to prevent their employees from remaining union members. Had they done so, they would have been acting unlawfully. That was never the purpose or the effect of the action that they took.

Mr. Dobson: The right hon. Gentleman referred to the 1982 debate involving Earl Ferrers. Will he confirm that, at the end of the paragraph from which he quoted, Earl Ferrers went on to say—it is the reverse of this situation, but we can assume that it applies both ways—

"What would be unfair would be to say, 'We shall negotiate a wage increase for union members and union members will have a wage increase, but meanwhile non-union employees will have no increase.'"

It appears from that debate that Earl Ferrers did not know whether he was talking out of his hat or his elbow.

Mr. Hunt: I was quoting from the end of the paragraph. The hon. Gentleman said that he was quoting from the end of the paragraph, but he did not. That is a matter of detail. The quotation used by the hon. Gentleman continues:

"However, it would not be unfair to have differentiation between the two."

The end of the next paragraph says:

"That would be unfair, but it would not be unfair to have a differentiation between rates of pay, provided that they are consistent."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 28 July 1982; Vol. 434, c. 331.]

It is simple to understand, but the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) obviously has some difficulty with it.

I shall explain in another way. Cases were brought against the two companies in question under what is now section 146 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992. In each case, the industrial tribunal found that the employer had contravened section 146, but in each case that finding was reversed by the employment appeal tribunal. The latter's rulings were fully in line with what had been generally accepted as the intention of the section and were in line with the words of the Labour spokesman—which I have already quoted—in 1975.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Hunt: I am still dealing with the point raised by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras.

On 30 April, the Court of Appeal reversed the decision of the employment appeal tribunal and ruled that the employers had acted unlawfully in both cases. As a result, it is clear that section 146 can be interpreted in ways that go far wider than was ever intended when Parliament originally adopted this provision in 1975. When the law has become so confused on such a fundamental matter, the case for amending the statute is overwhelmingly persuasive.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): I join other hon. Members in welcoming my right hon. Friend to his new position, but I wish that his first debate was not on such a subject.

The Court of Appeal said that the employment appeal tribunal was wrong to find any complication in the law. The Court of Appeal made it very plain that the industrial tribunal had been right to rule that the employers had acted unlawfully. There was nothing in the Court of Appeal judgement to suggest that there is any need for clarification or that the industrial tribunal ruling had changed the law. Having heard my right hon. Friend's speech, and bearing in mind what I call section 23(1)*(a)* of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 but which my right hon. Friend will call by its updated consolidation number, the House will want to consider whether the industrial tribunal ruling did in fact change the law from what it was held to be by most employers, all trade unions and people who have been industrial relations and personnel specialists for decades.

Mr. Hunt: I thank my hon. Friend for welcoming me to the Dispatch Box in my new position.

I have thought very long and hard about this aspect of the law. I am convinced that the Government's proposal and the Ullswater amendment in another place are absolutely right, and will do much to make the position as clear as it was before the Court of Appeal judgment. I ask my hon. Friend to reflect for a moment, because I believe that he is referring mainly to what are findings of fact by the tribunal.

[Mr. Hunt]

I in no way seek to diminish the tribunal's ability to reach findings of fact and to do so robustly, but I am seeking to return the law to where I believe it was generally believed to be before the Court of Appeal interpreted the law in a way in which I, those in another place, and I hope this House believe brought confusion to a matter which had previously been very clear indeed.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Does not the right hon. Gentleman recall that the judgment was announced on 30 April but that the Government announced that they were going to introduce amendments before the full transcript was available? In panic, at a very late stage, they subsequently included the amendment, which I do not believe will stand up in court because it is so incoherent. Is it not a fact that the Government's friends were found guilty, and that the price of support for the Prime Minister was to table the amendment?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman does nothing to assist his case by fogging the issue with such emotive phraseology. I strongly believe that, if one dispassionately considers the law as it is after the Court of Appeal judgment—it was, of course, necessary for the Government to move swiftly, because the Bill was in another place, and it was the final opportunity to make——

Mr. Martlew *rose*——

Mr. Hunt: May I finish my response?

As it was the final opportunity to make changes, one will see that the law needed clarification. That is what we are putting to the House this afternoon, and what my noble Friend Viscount Ullswater proposed in another place.

Mr. Martlew: Does the Secretary of State think it right that an employer should pay an employee more because the employee decides to give up his trade union rights?

Mr. Hunt: That, as I have explained, is contrary to the law.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): I am very interested in what my right hon. Friend is saying, but will he clarify one point? Is it his contention that, prior to the three cases being brought, it was legal to discriminate between employees who were in a union and those who were not? What was his understanding of the law before those cases were brought?

Mr. Hunt: As I have already said, it is contrary to section 146 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 for an employer to make it conditional on membership or non-membership of a trade union—trade union membership is the important point, and I am not talking about collective bargaining—*[Interruption.]* I understand that the hon. Member for Bolsover believes strongly that, without collective bargaining, it is impossible to have properly effective trade union rights, but that is an individual rule——

Mr. Skinner: Then membership means nothing.

Mr. Hunt: And membership means nothing. However, that is his individual view but, as I shall now explain to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin), not the law prior to the two Court of Appeal decisions. The hon. Gentleman knows that, because he has argued against Government proposals many times, saying that they drew the teeth of the trade union movement. It is possible for an employer to derecognise a trade union.

In response to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South, I must say that it is perfectly possible for an employer to offer a pay inducement or an additional pay rise to an employee who chooses to make an individual contract with the employer rather than through the collective bargaining processes. To return to the direct point that my hon. Friend made, it is still perfectly possible for that individual member to remain a trade union member and still benefit from that pay rise. The pay rise and the inducement must not be conditional upon membership or non-membership of a trade union.

That will do a great deal to reassure my hon. Friend because there has been an enormous amount of distortion outside the House. I hope that we can now return to the debate, which is about trade union membership—that is the subject of the amendment—and collective bargaining, which must be viewed separately.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East) *rose*——

Mr. Alex Carlile *rose*——

4.15 pm

Mr. Hunt: May I continue with what I was saying about the two cases? Then I shall, of course, give way again.

On 30 April, the Court of Appeal reversed the decision of the employment appeal tribunal and ruled that the employers had acted unlawfully in both cases. I have explained that, when the law has become so confused on so fundamental a matter, the case for amending the statute is overwhelmingly persuasive.

The section was intended to prevent employers from victimising individual employees on the ground that they were or were not trade union members. It was not intended to apply where an employer changes arrangements, such as pay negotiating arrangements, for organisational or business purposes. The fact that section 146 has now been interpreted as having a wider meaning shows that the law is unclear, and is no longer achieving the purpose for which it was intended. I have read out in the Chamber the words of Lord Jacques——

Mr. Alex Carlile *rose*——

Mr. Hunt: Let me finish my point.

If the section is no longer achieving the purpose for which it was intended, it is necessary—indeed, I contend that it is imperative—that the amendment be made.

The amendment clarifies for the benefit of tribunals and courts the way in which an employer's purpose should be determined in cases such as those that have occurred recently. It provides for the situation in which a case comes to a tribunal and, as happened in the cases in question, the employer and the individual put different arguments about the employer's purpose in taking a particular action.

Let me explain to my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) what will happen before the tribunal. The tribunal will consider the evidence that both parties bring before it, and will determine whether that evidence is credible. Then it will decide the case on the basis of that evidence. When credible evidence is brought forward, on the one hand that the employer's purpose was

to bring about a change in the way in which he conducted his relationship with his employees, or with a class of them, and on the other hand that his purpose was one falling within section 146, the tribunal is to take the bargaining purpose as the relevant purpose.

That is not to say that any tribunal's hands are to be tied. The tribunal must always have regard to the reasonableness of the action taken. If the action is such as no reasonable employer would take in the circumstances, the tribunal will still be able to decide that the action amounts to action short of dismissal, in the terms of section 146.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston) *rose*——

Mr. Hunt: I shall give way in a moment.

The amendment will restore the proper distinction, drawn in section 146 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992, between individual matters and collective matters. Section 146 will continue to give individuals protection against victimisation—that is, action short of dismissal—because of their trade union membership or non-membership, but it will not prevent employers from making and implementing legitimate decisions about how they wish to negotiate with their employees.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the Secretary of State take the view that Lord Justice Dillon was stating the law correctly when, in the Wilson case, he said that the employer enters a potential danger area—in other words, he breaks the law—if he offers a douceur to employees for supporting his policy of derecognising a union and making consequential changes in the terms and conditions of employment? If that is a correct statement of the law, as I certainly believe it to be, is not the Secretary of State now legalising the offering of what Lord Justice Dillon called a douceur to employees who will support his policy? Is not "douceur" a rather elegant alternative for "bribe"? How can the right hon. Gentleman justify such a change?

Mr. Hunt: I thought that I had dealt already with that matter. Having read the judgments of the Court of Appeal in both cases, I believe that the clear distinction that was drawn between individual rights of employees and collective bargaining issues has been confused. Surely that was never the legislature's intention in passing the original provision. I have already referred to Lord Jacques's comment that the provision deals with individual rights of employees, not collective bargaining issues.

It has always been possible for an employer to derecognise a particular trade union. It has always been possible for an employer to offer different rates of pay, to reward those employees who wish to enter into individual contracts rather than participate in collective bargaining. We could have a long argument, but I hope that hon. Members will accept that it is my genuine belief that the confusion between the individual rights of employees and collective bargaining issues has made the need for this amendment as urgent as I am arguing that it is.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I should like to quote some words of an employer. As it may be for an industrial tribunal to judge whether the employer was being reasonable, or whether any reasonable employer could hold this view, I do not want my right hon. Friend to reply to the point. These are the employer's words:

"We believe that higher pay for those on personal contracts is essential if individuals are to be treated fairly."

In other words, people doing the same work should be paid at different rates.

The House ought to consider whether a reasonable employer could hold that view. My understanding is that, according to the Ullswater amendment, whatever else might be demonstrated before an industrial tribunal, it will not be possible in such circumstances to demonstrate that an employer has acted unlawfully, as there is a purpose in addition to the purpose of deterring trade union membership.

Mr. Hunt: I am not disagreeing with my hon. Friend. Let him reflect on what I have just said. I have quoted from the speech that the noble Earl Ferrers made in another place in 1982. The noble Earl said that it would not be unfair to have differentiation between rates of pay. It has always been possible for an employer to offer additional money to employees who are prepared to enter into individual contracts. I have been trying to explain to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery that this amendment is necessary so that we may get back to the situation that existed not just before the Court of Appeal cases but since 1975.

The amendment does no more than clarify this aspect of the law. It will apply only in a particular set of circumstances, similar to those that arose in the recent cases that I described. Only when an employer wishes to bring about a change in the way in which he conducts his relationship with his employees and in order to do so takes action that is argued to be in contravention of section 146 will the amendment come into play—and even then only if the action is reasonable in all the circumstances.

It is an important amendment, but it does not amount to a change in the law as it was understood before the Court of Appeal cases. As I have argued, the Government believe that it does no more than to ensure that the law is applied in the way that was originally intended, by clarifying the distinction between bargaining arrangements on the one hand and membership of trade unions on the other.

Mr. Martlew: Is the Minister saying that, if an individual employee for some reason did not wish to join a trade union, it would be legal for the employer to negotiate a contract allowing him to pay that employee less than the members of a trade union?

Mr. Hunt: It is perfectly possible—indeed, it is part of normal practice—for employers to wish to enter into individual arrangements with individual employees and to provide additional rates of pay if that employee decides to move in that direction. It is perfectly possible to have differential rates of pay. That could mean more or it could mean less: it has always been possible to pay less or more in accordance with individual contracts with individual employees. The hon. Member for Bolsover pointed out that, in the UDM-NUM case, the issue was extra pay because of trade union membership. That is why I differentiated as I did.

Mr. Leighton: We seem to be living in an age of macho management. The Minister says that it has always been possible to do this sort of thing. Can he give examples of precedents for employers offering such "douceurs"?

Mr. Hunt: It is a recognised fact of life: it happens all the time in various industries. I find it extraordinary that, whereas the traditional case made by Opposition Members for trade union membership has been that trade unions force wages up, they now argue that companies all over the United Kingdom will actually pay people more when they renource collective bargaining arrangements. That is a paradox that I find it difficult to accept. Of course I will provide the hon. Gentleman with precedents, but I ask him to take it from me that the amendment merely takes the law back to where it is believed it was before the Court of Appeal cases.

Moreover, I want to make it very clear—because I reckon that we may be treated to some wild assertions by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson)—that the amendment will not apply solely to cases in which the action taken by the employer is related to his decision to derecognise a trade union. The amendment means that, in any circumstances in which an employer wants to change his negotiating arrangements and takes reasonable action to bring about that change, he will not be acting in contravention of section 146 of the 1992 Act.

Mr. Devlin: I accept what my hon. Friend says about the law always having been this way, but may I go back to the point made much earlier by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile)? I am not saying that my hon. Friend the Minister is wrong but, if—I emphasise "if"—it were found that the law as it is now being clarified was in breach of the European convention on human rights, would the Government then be prepared to change the law as quickly as possible to bring the clarification within the remit of the convention?

Mr. Hunt: I would not bring forward the amendment if I felt that it would be in breach of international conventions or would affect the right of an individual to belong, or not to belong, to a trade union. I make that clear to the House. Obviously, the law is kept under review. If there is an argument that my hon. Friend can make, I shall look at it, but I present the case to the House on the basis that there is to be a clear distinction between trade union membership on the one hand and collective bargaining rights on the other.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

4.30 pm

Mr. Hunt: I shall finish dealing with the point before giving way, because I wish to make it clear that the amendment means that, in any situation in which an employer wants to change his negotiating arrangements and takes reasonable action to bring about that change, he will not be acting in contravention of section 146.

I give another example. It means that if an employer wants to introduce a single-union deal—that is, recognition, for collective bargaining purposes, of a single union to represent the work force—he will be able to offer his employees a financial or other incentive to persuade them to agree to such an arrangement.

It will, as I have emphasised, remain unlawful for any employer to take action against any employee on grounds of trade union membership or non-membership. But an employer would not be acting unlawfully if he took action to encourage his employees to be represented in negotiations by a trade union. The employer who judges that a single union deal or collective agreement is the best option for his business will be protected by the amendment, just as much as the employer who opts for personal contracts. I hope that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras will bear that in mind.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, during the 1980s, there was a trend towards individualised contracts or single-union deals because of the efficiency and competitiveness that resulted from them, and because they allowed terms and conditions of employment to be tailored to the needs of the workplace? Does he agree that many modern businesses that are competing well in Swindon, Sunderland and elsewhere have those arrangements?

Mr. Hunt: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. A major achievement of Conservative Governments who have introduced legislation in this area since 1979 has been to remove the rigidities which inhibited competitiveness in the British economy. The statistics show that clearly. Opposition Members are always throwing statistics at the Government. I ask them to heed the statistics that show that, between 1974 and 1979, when we last had a Labour Government, the average number of working days lost per 1,000 employees was over 500. We are now down to 20, 30 or 40 working days lost per 1,000 employees. That is the greatest testimony to the success of Conservative industrial relations legislation.

Mr. Barnes: Does the Minister believe that trade unions should be only friendly societies, providing legal services and pension funds for their members, and should not be involved collectively in bargaining to improve the conditions of their members? That seems to be the attitude surrounding the right hon. Gentleman's argument, particularly in relation to Opposition Members.

Mr. Hunt: It is on that point that the hon. Gentleman probably has the biggest problem understanding the situation. It is for employees to decide whether or not they wish—*[Interruption.]* I thought that the hon. Gentleman referred to collective negotiation. I am differentiating between collective bargaining and individual trade union membership.

I assure the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) that I have had the benefit of a great deal of experience of trade unions. To describe them as friendly societies—while, at the same time, the only alternative is collective bargaining—is ridiculous. Trade union membership means much more than just membership of a friendly society, even when the members of a trade union decide that they do not wish their trade union membership to be involved in any way in their collective bargaining issues.

Only an employer can determine the negotiating arrangements that best suit his specific business, on the basis of his knowledge of all the relevant circumstances. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) said, if an employer comes to the conclusion that he wishes to move from collective bargaining to a more flexible pay negotiating system, why should the law prevent him from taking reasonable steps to encourage his work force to agree to his proposals and thus implement that decision? Why should employees who want to benefit

from moving to personal contracts be prevented from doing so, whether they are trade union members or not? Those are the questions that the House must answer.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): Like other hon. Members, I welcome the Secretary of State to the Dispatch Box in his new position. I first recall him as a more junior Minister for Energy, and he was competent and proficient then. This afternoon, he is trying to make a fist of his job, under the guise of clarification of the law, to make a fairly radical change to it. The law did not need clarification in the first place. At least, if it needed clarification, it would appear to be only for the Secretary of State. He is simply trying to convince the House that many people out there want the change—the clarification—that he is offering.

This afternoon, Cleveland county council faxed to me a clear statement that it is wholly opposed to the proposals, and asked me to bring that opposition to the attention of the Secretary of State. I am sure that he will not be surprised by that, and will tell me that it is because Cleveland county council is Labour-dominated. I want him to know that a unanimous decision was made at a fully attended meeting, so everyone is against his proposal.

Mr. Hunt: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind words. I hope that his attempt to destroy my career by heaping me with praise will be unsuccessful.

As far as Cleveland county council is concerned, many outside observers have had considerable concerns aroused by listening to media reports and reading some of the press reports and scare stories about this amendment. I encourage the hon. Gentleman to ensure that a copy of *Hansard* containing my speech and his intervention goes straight back to the council, and that the council reconsiders its decision in the light of the assurances that I have given.

To allow a law that was created for different purposes to impede business decisions of the nature that I have described is wrong. I reiterate that amendment No. 8 will restore the law to the meaning that it was intended to have when it was approved by Parliament in 1975, and I commend it to the House.

Mr. Dobson: I welcome the Secretary of State to his task. He comes to it with a newspaper reputation for liberalism and decency, and we look forward to evidence of that at some stage in the proceedings.

I remind the House that, since I first stood for Parliament, I have been sponsored by what is now the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers, formerly the National Union of Railwaymen. The union makes a substantial contribution to my election expenses and the salary of my agent. I am grateful to the union for its help. I am proud to be sponsored by the union of which both my father and grandfather were members. I am proud to be associated with the union that represents thousands of transport workers, especially the railway workers employed at King's Cross, Euston and St. Pancras main line stations and 16 other stations, mainly on the underground, which are all in my constituency. Those facts are well known to my constituents and have always been on the public record—and that is how it should be. Only those who are ashamed of the sources of their funds need to keep them secret.

Let me make it clear that we are utterly opposed to amendment No. 8 passed by the other place. We object to it because it is wrong in principle and certain to be harmful in practice. The proposal is a savage attack on the rights of individual employees. It undermines their right to freedom of association and to choose freely who will represent them. We also object to the way in which the amendment was bounced through the other place, without proper consultation or notice. Presented at the last minute, the amendment was an abuse of parliamentary procedure and the Government's powers. It was most ably resisted by Labour and other peers, but the Government used their majority to force it through.

For those reasons, we pressed the Government to devote the rest of today's debate to this important amendment and we are glad that they have agreed. I hope, although I am not hopeful, that by the end of the debate they will accept that their proposal is wrong. By the amendment the Government propose to make it lawful for employers to bribe employees to give up the right to trade union representation. In other words, this corrupt Government want to make corruption part of the law of the land. Until now everyone has accepted that such action by employers was against the law.

The law in question was first passed in 1975. It has remained unamended since then, through all the changing scenes of life at the Department of Employment—untouched by Tebbit or Thatcher and undefiled even by the right hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard). The Tories have passed five major industrial relations laws since 1979, but until now this law has been left intact. The present law is set out in the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 which was passed as recently as 14 July last year. That Act makes it unlawful for an employer to dismiss an employee for being a union member or for joining in union activities. The Act also makes it unlawful for an employer to take "action short of dismissal" with the purpose of preventing or deterring an employee from joining a union and to penalise an employee for doing so. The Act also makes it unlawful to prevent or deter an employee from or penalise him for taking part in union activities. Such action is, rightly, against the law, yet this amendment would change all that.

If we were to agree to the amendment, it would permit employers to prevent or deter employees from union membership or union activity and to penalise them for it. The amendment would not just permit employers to act in that outrageous way, but would encourage them by giving their action the seal of parliamentary approval.

All this has come about because on 30 April the Court of Appeal made it clear that the law meant what it said: that it was unlawful for an employer to offer bribes or threaten fines to induce employees to give up trade union representation. The Court of Appeal took the common-sense view that bribes and fines meant that employers were out to prevent, deter or penalise trade unionists.

It is worth reminding the House just who had been breaking the law. The two companies in question were Associated Newspapers, owners of the *Daily Mail* and by appointment principal media supporters of the Tory party, and Associated British Ports, by appointment of this Tory Government owners of Britain's privatised ports. Both companies had long-standing agreements with their employees to recognise trade unions and negotiate with them the terms and conditions of those of their employees who wished to be represented in that way. In the case of the *Daily Mail*, the agreement dated back to 1912. Under the agreements negotiations were conducted between the

[Mr. Dobson]

employers on the one hand and the unions on the other, and the employers and employees each chose who would represent them in the negotiations. Both companies decided that they wanted to put an end to these arrangements and put their employees on individual contracts that ruled out employees being represented by their union. In other words, in future the employer would decide who represented both sides in the negotiations.

Mr. Heald *rose*——

4.45 pm

Mr. Dobson: Just a minute. I may give way in a moment.

In case anyone thinks I am exaggerating, I refer the House to the Court of Appeal judgment which records that at Associated Newspapers the group managing director explained that

"henceforth staff would be represented by their Editors and Heads of Department."

In other words, in future relations between staff and management individual staff would be represented by their boss who would in turn negotiate with his or her boss. The Tories have some strange concepts of representation, but that beggars all description.

In an effort to induce employees to accept this one-sided bargain to give up the right to choose who represented them or the right even to seek such representation in future, both companies offered big pay increases to those employees who were willing under duress to sign away their rights. The companies denied such pay increases to any employees who refused to relinquish trade union representation. As I shall explain, the sums were not trivial.

In the case of Associated Newspapers, Mr. David Wilson, backed up by the National Union of Journalists, challenged this as an unlawful action short of dismissal. Dock workers from Southampton, Mr. Teddy Palmer, Mr. Brian Stedman and Mr. Eddie Wyeth, backed up by the Rail, Maritime and Transport union, made a similar challenge. In both cases the employees were supported by an industrial tribunal. In both cases their arguments were rejected in rather bizarre and certainly non-unanimous judgments of the employment appeal tribunal. In both cases the employees were backed unanimously and clearly by the Court of Appeal.

Mr. Heald: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dobson: Not for the moment.

The Tory Government, however, inhabit a world where big business can do no wrong. The Government decided that if the views of Associated Newspapers and Associated British Ports did not conform to the law, it was right that their views should become the law, so we have this amendment.

Mr. Heald: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dobson: I will in a moment.

I ask the Secretary of State to make public all representations made to him, his predecessors or any of his colleagues or officials by Associated Newspapers or Associated British Ports or anyone on their behalf. Will he tell us what threats were issued and what promises were made? Will either company contribute in future to Tory party funds? I admit that these companies and others like them may not have a vote at the Tory party conference, but they do not need one. By arm twisting in secret, they have got the Tory Government to change the law and strengthen their position by taking away the rights of their employees.

Mr. Heald *rose*——

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman has a handout from his Front Bench.

Mr. Heald: This is actually a letter asking me to phone my wife.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I am sure that the message from the hon. Member's wife has nothing to do with the debate.

Mr. Heald: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that for Associated Newspapers and Associated British Ports the decision has been made? There is nothing in this for them because the proposal starts from now. It does not affect the past.

Mr. Dobson: There are plenty of times when I am glad that I am not a lawyer and I am even gladder, if there is such a word, having heard that contribution from one who is. That is one of the daftest interventions that I have heard in this place—and I have heard some daft ones.

The amendment is before us now because the Court of Appeal upheld the position of people who had worked for many years at Associated Newspapers and Associated British Ports. We are illustrating what will happen to others if the House agrees to the amendment, only in future such action will have the endorsement of Parliament. If the amendment is agreed and the Government make it lawful to bribe and fine employees for seeking to be represented by a union, will any action short of dismissal be against the law? Will there be no limit on what employers can do?

In future, as a result of the amendment, employers will be able to promote and demote, not on merit but on the basis of an employee's willingness to sign away his rights. Employers will offer longer holidays or shorter hours only to those who conform. Non-conforming employees will be the ones who are redeployed from a good location to a bad one in an unpopular part of the country. They will be the ones set to work in the worst conditions, doing the dirtiest and most dangerous jobs. They will be the ones who are made to work awkward shifts or permanent nights.

The Tories are introducing victimisation by Act of Parliament. As a result of the amendment, employers will also be able to deny profit sharing or bonuses to people who want to be represented by their union. Unscrupulous employers will also be able to threaten the pensions and other benefits of employees.

If employers are to be allowed, by law, to bribe and fine, is there anything that they will be prevented from doing in the future? Under the new Tory law anything goes. Employers will be able to exercise any duress on their employees to make them deal with their bosses on their own, without the help of their union.

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): The Government's action causes great constitutional concern because it is clear that, if courts decide anything that is offensive to the Government, the Government will then

change the law. Are we not moving towards a one-party or fascist state, where the courts become the puppet of the state and the Government?

Mr. Dobson: My hon. Friend has raised an extremely good point. The reason why the Government are so opposed to the European Community having any say in our employment legislation is that, in the case of laws that start with the Community, if the Government are found to be breaking them, they must put those laws right. They cannot just change court decisions on a whim, as they have done in this case.

What is happening is part and parcel of the Government's move to derecognise trade unions. They started with GCHQ, as the Secretary of State said, with their step-by-step approach. They have kept up the pressure. Their object is to weaken not just trade unions, but the bargaining position of employees.

Unions came into being because individual employees realised that they were in a poor bargaining position when up against a corporate body with enormous assets and legal privileges. That is as true today as it was in the past. The lack of parity between employers and individual employees was recognised as long ago as 1908 by Winston Churchill, who said:

"Where . . . you have a powerful organisation on both sides . . . you have a healthy bargaining which increases the competitive power of industry and thus forces a progressive standard of life . . . But where you have no organisation, no parity of bargaining, the good employer is undercut by the bad and the bad employer undercut by the worst."

Putting people on individual contracts is to make a mockery of the idea of parity of bargaining. Just look at the bargaining position in the two cases that went to the Court of Appeal.

Associated British Ports must be a wealthy organisation because it pays the boss more than £233,000 a year in salary alone. It has a turnover of £310 million and pre-tax profits of £97 million. Teddy Palmer, Brian Stedman and Eddie Wyeth did not have such resources at their disposal. All that they had to bring to the bargaining process was their skill and experience. If they did not accept the terms offered by Associated British Ports, the alternative was to try to get another job. I must point out to the Secretary of State that that is not much of an alternative in Southampton, where, even according to the Government's fiddled figures, more than 13,000 people are on the dole. That was not much of an alternative for three men, whose average age was 50, in a city where one in five men are officially out of work. There was no parity of bargaining there and the Secretary of State knows it, but he wants the newly privatised bosses to get their own way.

Associated Newspapers is so wealthy that its highest paid director was paid more than £500,000 last year. It has assets of £500 million and pre-tax profits of £76 million. I am sure that very few people would believe that one solitary journalist had parity of bargaining with that company, which owns the *Daily Mail*, *The Mail on Sunday* and the *Evening Standard* and which supplies teletext to ITV.

Those two companies are not, of course, the only ones that are derecognising unions. In the publishing industry, Reed Elsevier, the printing and publishing company, is busily trying to put all its British employees on individual contracts and to end union recognition. There is not much parity of bargaining there. Even before its merger with Elsevier, Reed International was so wealthy that it paid its chairman £391,000 and had net assets in excess of £1·4 billion. It is ironic that the new combined company can pursue its course of action only in Britain. The Elsevier part of the operation is still based in Holland, where the company is required by law to recognise unions and operate works councils.

Another major British company, Shell UK, is trying to put its employees on individual contracts and derecognise the unions. Shell is such a rich organisation that it pays its directors more than £1 million. Its net assets total more than £3,500 million. No parity of bargaining exists between Shell and its individual employees. Even with collective bargaining, such a company has always had the whip hand.

Mr. Bill Etherington (Sunderland, North): I am enjoying my hon. Friend's speech. Has it occurred to him that one reason for trying to keep employees wages down might be so that many of the illustrious companies can add a little more to the Conservative party coffers, even though we do not know the exact amounts?

Mr. Dobson: As far as I know, there is no evidence, yet, that Polly Peck is derecognising unions. I must admit, however, that I am not familiar with employment protection laws in northern Cyprus. The Lord Chancellor might be, however, because he paid it a special visit.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Considering that the debate is about the position of trade unions and the rights of individuals, can the hon. Gentleman tell the House whether he believes a system of one man, one vote should be introduced for the election of the Labour leader and Labour Members?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The proposed one man, one vote for the Labour party or anywhere else has nothing to do with the debate.

Mr. Dobson: The problem is that, in the companies I have mentioned, it has been decided that one man, the chairman, has one vote and he votes in both sides of the negotiations.

If the amendment goes through, every company that wants to derecognise unions will be given a free hand by the Government. All forms of bribery and coercion will be made lawful. It is all part of the wretched Government's craven approach to international competition. They no longer believe that we can compete with Germany, Japan, Holland or Belgium on quality.

Whatever personal ambitions may drive individual members of the Cabinet, when it comes to the future of our country the Cabinet Room has become an ambition-free zone. Instead of competing with the best on quality, the Tories have thrown in the towel. The future that they offer for Britain is to compete not with the best on quality but with the cheapest on price. The Tories want to drive down wages. They want British people to continue to work the longest hours in Europe and to take the shortest holidays.

Mr. David Hunt: I am sorry to interrupt such a carefully prepared speech. I greatly appreciated the opening generous remarks of the hon. Gentleman. He asked me a specific question about Associated British Ports and Associated Newspapers, but he will recollect that I was not Secretary of State at the time when those cases came to court. I have checked, however, and I am advised that no representations of any sort were made by either ABP or

[Mr. David Hunt]

Associated Newspapers before the Government decided to act. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will withdraw his accusation. Instead of relying on such a heavily prepared script, will he address the issues that I raised in my opening remarks?

5 pm

Mr. Dobson: The right hon. Gentleman has not answered all my questions or those that I asked on behalf of other people. He is getting a bit like the bosses of the companies: he prepares his speech, but apparently does not like it when I prepare one. We listened to him for three quarters of an hour and did not get one inch further forward. I am proceeding with my speech as I prepared it.

Mr. Hunt: I will also use the words, "or any other persons on their behalf". Of course, the hon. Gentleman had a right to prepare his remarks. All I am asking is that, at some stage during his reply, he addresses the issues that I raised.

Mr. Dobson: Although the right hon. Gentleman is a Secretary of State, he must learn that, to be in order, one addresses the subject of the amendment. One does not necessarily have to address all the issues raised by Conservative Members. I am addressing what I believe to be the major issues that arise from this disgusting amendment. I shall continue to raise such issues insofar as they remain in order.

In order to reduce wages—which is the only way that the Government believe we can compete—the Government need to weaken the bargaining position of British people at work. They do not do that simply by threatening them with a dole queue of 4 million. The Tories are determined to casualise employment in Britain, and the proposals are part of that casualisation process.

At present, people who want to work full time are being forced to go part time. Millions of people—mainly women—are left with no right against unlawful dismissal unless they have worked for five years. People with family responsibilities are being told that they face the sack if they do not work all the hours that God sends. People who thought that they had a career have been called in by their bosses and told that they can have a two or three year contract—and must take it or leave it. People have been told that, under their new contracts, they can find and fund their own pensions. As a result, people at work are feeling more and more threatened and insecure.

I am talking not about any old people, but about the people of this country who are being treated worse at work than any other people in western Europe. It is disgraceful to have to say it, but they are being treated in that way by British-owned companies at the behest of the British Government. It is not Nissan or Toyota which behaves in that fashion—generally, the multinationals do not behave badly. They know the obligations expected of employers in Europe. They are accustomed, at least in Europe, to complying with international standards and are familiar with dealing with Governments who discharge their international obligations.

The Opposition's next objection to the amendment is that they believe that the proposal will infringe the right to form or join a trade union set out in the European convention on human rights. We believe that it will infringe the right to organise which was set out in the Council of Europe's social charter. We believe that it will infringe the guarantee of the right to collective bargaining set out in the treaty of Rome, and the obligation to develop a dialogue between management and labour required under the Single European Act, which was pushed through the House by the use of a guillotine motion by Mrs. Thatcher's Government. It will breach the International Labour Organisation convention, which provides protection against anti-union discrimination and specifically outlaws deprivation of wages or limitation on wages for taking part in union activities.

Just in case the Euro-sceptics on the Conservative Benches are not impressed by the mainly European obligations that I have listed and believe that such protection is confined to Europe, I should add that, in Japan, the right of workers to organise, bargain and act collectively is guaranteed by the Japanese constitution. The Opposition believe that if workers in the rest of the European Community and Japan receive the benefit of decent employment protection laws, British workers should receive the same.

The Government have come up with two justifications for the change in the law. They have argued that their proposal is not an attack on the right of employees to be members of a trade union. The Tories say that the proposal only prevents union members from trying to make use of their membership. That argument was rejected by the Court of Appeal, which quoted with approval an earlier decision quoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle). That decision, which is worth repeating, stated:

"the activities of a trade union officer in negotiating and elucidating terms of employment is . . . the outward and visible manifestation of trade union membership."

It also stated that the argument now used by the Government would emasculate legal protection. Later, the Court of Appeal described as unreal the argument that being a union member meant nothing more than having a membership card. How right it was: having a union card but not being allowed to use it would be as unreal as having a credit card, but not being allowed to use it. In those circumstances, both cards would be neither use nor ornament.

Although Conservative Members may prefer to forget what they said at the general election, I am sure that my hon. Friends need not be reminded that the Tory party manifesto stated that the Labour party would disrupt industrial peace by weakening the courts. It is not the Labour party which is weakening the courts today. The Tories also said that the workers' rights in which they believed were those which enhanced individuals' status and opportunities. David Wilson, Teddy Palmer, Brian Stedman and Eddie Wyeth are all individuals. What about their status and opportunities? What about the status and opportunities of the thousands of individuals who will now be subject to lawful bribery and brow-beating if the amendment is passed?

The Government have also claimed that the amendment is necessary to clarify the law. Presumably they would like us to believe that Associated Newspapers and Associated British Ports were innocently misled into their law-breaking campaign of bribery and corruption. Most people would find that hard to believe. They would find it even harder to believe if they knew about the battery of lawyers that each company has deployed on the case.

The law is clear; the wording is plain. However, if for the sake of argument we were to conclude that the law needed to be clarified, that does not mean that it needs to be clarified for the benefit of employers and the disadvantage of employees. It could be clarified in another way. Parliament could make clearer still the fact that bribery is against the law. That is what was previously meant and what the law should mean now.

We believe that British people should have more rights at work than they have now. In times of rapid industrial change, uncertainty and insecurity, people at work need more protection, not less. Their need for trade unions grows rather than diminishes in times like the present. When individual employees are being picked off at leisure by unscrupulous employers, the right of employees to act together to protect one another should be strengthened, not weakened. We believe that the Government should end derecognition by changing the law.

We believe that, as in the rest of the European Community, employees in Britain should have the right to be represented through trade unions, and that that recognition should be obligatory where there is substantial support among the employees. That idea works as we can see from the rest of the EC. Decent employment laws do not hold back countries or economies. Decent employment laws apply in the seven EC countries which have a higher standard of living than Britain. Decent employment laws apply in the seven EC countries which export more per head of population than does Britain. Decent employment laws apply in every other EC country which have a better trade balance with the rest of the world than Britain has. Decent employment laws go with economic success, high pay and prosperity. The Government's policies of promoting casual employment and insecurity go with economic failure, low pay and poverty.

The amendment shows the Tory party at its worst, capitulating to secret pressures from its rich and powerful supporters to the disadvantage of ordinary people who have to work for a living. It is wrong in principle, it will be harmful in practice, and it will add to the growing insecurity of everyone at work. It is an assault on free trade unions and seeks to shift Britain's industrial relations back to the previous century rather than move them forward to new, better and more productive relationships for the century to come. This elected House should represent the interests of people at work and tell the House of Lords, "We do not accept this amendment."

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The amendment proposes to change the part of the Bill that is headed:

"Rights in relation to union membership".

It is clear that it has to do with wrongs in relation to union membership.

It was recently said that

"talk of undermining freedom of association was poppycock".

I should like to share with the House the decision of the industrial tribunal. Paragraph 60 of its report states:

"The Tribunal was satisfied that in the context of this case and on the facts we have found the respondents' purpose was so to reduce the power of the union as to negate it totally. If this had not been their purpose they would have recognised the union for matters other than wage negotiations if they had so wished."

To say that what the amendment proposes is not an attack on free association is undermined by those words.

On page 16 of his Court of Appeal judgment, after the quotation

"The purpose was not in dispute—it was to 'end collective bargaining'".

Lord Justice Dillon said:

"That was indeed the stated purpose of the employers, and it is common ground that 'collective bargaining' was not intended to be limited to collective bargaining about pay."

We have on reasonable authority, on behalf of the Government, the statement that discrimination against individual workers on grounds of trade union membership will remain illegal. Paragraph 61 of the industrial tribunal's judgment states:

"The Tribunal considered that the respondents were fully aware that by depriving the union of any function in the work place (save on health and safety) they were effectively rendering the union powerless and thus membership pointless."

I remind the House that the case before the industrial tribunal was under a section dealing with deterring an individual from union membership. It is difficult to square that with the statement that discrimination against individual workers on the ground of trade union membership will remain illegal.

My understanding of the words to be inserted before clause 13 of the Bill by what is referred to as the Ullswater amendment is that they would forbid an industrial tribunal to hold that an employer had acted illegally if the consequence of his action would be held by that tribunal to have the purpose of deterring an individual from union membership.

Those of us who want to support the Government—as I normally do, though in this case I want to keep the law as it is—have been told that if an employer can show that it is reasonable to have another purpose, an industrial tribunal will not be able to hold that that which is now illegal will remain illegal.

I could quote at length from the Court of Appeal judgment, which upholds without difficulty the industrial tribunal's findings of fact and law. I shall not do that, but shall merely quote from paragraph 62 of the industrial tribunal finding. It states:

"The Tribunal did not consider that the respondents"—that is, the employers—

"could hide behind their right to de-recognise the union so as to deny successfully their ultimate purpose which was to effect the wholly foreseeable consequence of deterring individual journalists from being union members."

Of course, the case goes far wider than that because for "journalists" we could read "any employees".

5.15 pm

In his judgment, Lord Justice Dillon considers the four points that the employment appeal tribunal considered. He says that the employment appeal tribunal found a distinction or a difference that did not amount to much.

The question was: what was the purpose of the employers in derecognising the union, ending collective bargaining and changing the terms and conditions of their employees? It was held, with the agreement of the other members of the Court of Appeal, that the industrial tribunal was entitled to find that the purpose was as stated in paragraph 60:

"so to reduce the power of the union as to negate it totally."

The evidence quoted by Lord Justice Dillon is sufficient to support that finding, which does not square with the statement

"that talk of undermining freedom of association is poppycock".

It is unwise for hon. Members to say that the considered view of a member of the Court of Appeal is "poppycock".

If I wanted to disagree with the Court of Appeal's judgment, I should say, "It has stated the law, which is its right, unless that is overturned by the House of Lords, but I should prefer the law to be different from what it appears to the Court of Appeal and the industrial tribunal." Although my background is not comprehensive, I would argue that people have understood the law for about the last decade.

I was taken on as an industrial relations officer by the British Steel Corporation in 1968. I spent a year working with industrial relations and personnel specialists throughout the corporation, which was substantially larger then than it is now. I had dealings with Government Departments and worked in an office that dealt with local and national trade union relations, personnel and social policy. I was fairly low down.

I gained the qualifications of the Institute of Personnel Management and was later upgraded to a fellow of the institute. I do not think that it was a consequence of that that the then Prime Minister asked me to join the Department of Employment, where, for more than a year, I was an Under-Secretary with responsibility for industrial relations, employment law and matters such as health and safety. Following a change of responsibilities, I took over equal opportunities from Alan Clark. Since that time, I have maintained an interest in those issues.

With the exception of one or two parts, the Bill has my support because it is justifiable. I shall not reiterate any of my speeches on Report or on Second Reading. That which the Minister has tried to defend in the context of this amendment is unjustifiable. If the amendment is accepted, its provisions will be reversed in the same way as the exportation of the Tolpuddle martyrs in 1834 was reversed three years later, I think by a Conservative Government, although when the martyrs returned the Government may have changed.

The watchword of those farm labourers from Dorset, who, in practice, were sent abroad because they had formed a trade union, was, "We will, we will, we will be free."

The Court of Appeal has said that employees are free to join trade unions and that whatever other purpose an employer may have, if he takes action that has the effect of totally negating trade union membership, that is and has been unlawful. I think that that is a fair summary of the law.

Whatever other purpose the employers had in the newspaper case and the ports case, what they did was unlawful because it totally negated union membership.

The Ullswater amendment states that we can consider some other purpose and let it overrule the admitted effect of what employers do.

On the last Sunday of Labour government in 1979, there was a Conservative Trade Unionists rally at Wembley attended by 2,000 trade union members and their families. I was the president of Conservative Trade Unionists at that time. Margaret Thatcher was there and many people spoke. We were demonstrating that trade union members and their families were welcome within the Conservative family and could trust the Conservatives to do things that were defensible on the shop floor, in the office and in various other places where people work.

I am not arguing against individual contracts for senior people or for people of any grade or level within an organisation. As the industrial tribunal held in paragraphs 60, 61 and 62 that the effect of what the employers did was totally to negate trade union membership, that should be regarded in simple terms as a straightforward undermining of freedom of association.

Associated Newspapers could have achieved its objective in a way that was not unlawful, although I would not necessarily have approved of what it did. I should be careful about how I put this, but newspapers have had great success in getting employees on to individual contracts whether or not they wanted them. In my view, it would have been possible for Associated Newspapers to achieve its objective without acting unlawfully, but it is not my purpose to give newspapers free consultancy advice on how to achieve their aims; they have plenty of good lawyers of their own.

The ports employer wrote to me saying that the company

"took legal advice at every stage of the transition to personal contracts".

If it took legal advice and was held by the industrial tribunal and the Court of Appeal to have done something illegal, I suggest that the company should consider the quality of that legal advice. If it argued that because it is now preparing to apply for leave to go to the House of Lords, let me make the following plea to my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench.

The cost and the financial risk to an employee and a trade union of even getting to the Court of Appeal where one is facing rafts of QCs is high. I would estimate that the cost to one of those applicants, if they had failed in the Court of Appeal, would have been about £150,000.

The law is supposed to be, and always was, clear. It was obvious to the industrial tribunal and the Court of Appeal. Will my right hon. Friend consider taking over the action if leave is granted by the House of Lords and indemnify the successful applicant? I am not asking for an answer today.

The Government's intention is quite clear, as shown by Lord Ullswater's announcement six days after the Court of Appeal gave its decision, that they would overturn the judgment by the Court of Appeal. Six days is pretty fast in Government terms, especially when two days were a weekend and one may have been a bank holiday; they could not have had more than four working days. If, from the moment they heard the result or even before the Court of Appeal produced its judgment, the Government's intention had been to nullify any judgment not in accord with their now stated view, there is a case in justice and equity for the Government to say that the Appeal Court decision to award costs to the applicant would stand so that, in any case in the House of Lords at least, the applicants would not be at further financial risk.

The Government made it plain on 6 May, in the debate in the House of Lords on 24 May and again today that they are not at present willing to accept the law as stated by the Court of Appeal. My view is that there is no reason for the House of Lords to give leave to appeal, because the confusion in the minds of the employment appeal tribunal —a perfectly genuine confusion—was in the distinction of words. The Court of Appeal judgment was clear.

Let us move on to what is right and return to the law in a moment. There are two circumstances that trouble or should trouble the House. The first is where there are collective agreements. The employer wants to derecognise the union for a purpose or for all purposes except for health and safety at work, as the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 would not allow that.

If individual contracts are to be imposed, or if collective bargaining is to be nullified, my understanding is that the employer has to give sufficient notice and then can say, "From our point of view, the collective agreement has gone and there will be new terms of employment." In those circumstances, an employer should not be able to take action that discriminates between union members and non-union members to the effect of totally negating union membership.

The second circumstance would involve an employer whose employees are on individual contracts. Let us suppose that one or two of the employees join a union, or have always been a member of a union, but want to start working together collectively and approach the employer on that basis. If in the individual contracts of employment, out of a pay index of 100, for example, 20 units or one fifth of the employees' salary was paid as a consideration for being on individual contracts of employment, would the employer be able to say to two or more employees who had asked a union to approach the employer asking for collective recognition and bargaining—a perfectly reasonable request—"We are sorry, but because your contract of employment which you signed as an employee and we signed as an employer says that one fifth of your earnings are in consideration of your being on individual contracts, and because your union has now made an approach, you should now give back 20 per cent. of your pay"? Would that be lawful?

As the consideration of being on individual contracts was 4·5 per cent. in the Associated Newspapers case, I should like to have stated with authority what the position would be. I am not a lawyer; I have only been involved in industrial relations, industrial economics and other practical things. Perhaps a clever lawyer can find a way of making sure there is an instant penalty if ever a union representative appears at an employer's door saying, "We have been asked by some of your work force if you will speak to us as their representatives." I find it very worrying and see it as a possibility of undermining freedom of association.

In my trade union branch we have had occasional campaigns, although I have not taken an active part in them, to get union recognition in the hotel and catering industries, which used to have some minimum protection by wages councils, at least for a minimum hourly rate. We have been told by some Ministers that the abolition of wages councils would lead to an increase in employment. I say in passing that the best estimate was that if we reduced the pay of people on minimum rates by 18 per cent. we might achieve a 1 per cent. increase in employment in those fields.

The implication of the abolition of wages councils was that collective agreements could come in and do as well. The case constantly being offered to the House was of people in the road haulage industry, leaving aside the fact that that industry has some of the strongest union organisation in the country.

People in wages councils industries, or what will soon be ex-wages councils industries, are in the main presumably on individual contracts of employment, as union organisation is not strong in those industries. If a trade union representative, whether a lay representative or a paid representative, goes to the employer and says, "I want to say a few words on behalf of the people you employ," will penalties on those workers be lawful?

An employer can say, hand on heart, "It is in the interests of my employees, because it is in the interests of my customers, for all employees to be on individual contracts" and may consider that to be a reasonable belief. It would not be a common one, but it might be held to be reasonable. If not, what is the point of the Ullswater amendment?

I return to what people thought the law had been. That point was made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State who spoke about restoring the law to what it was held to be. The Appeal Court has done that. I am becoming more conservative as I spend more years in the House. Perhaps I have spent too long in the House because I am becoming a little stuck in the mud.

The law was commonly held by people in personnel management, in the Industrial Society, among trade unions and among most employers' associations to be that action could not be taken which would, in effect, negate the benefits of union membership, with the exception, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would remind me if I did not say it first, of some rights concerning accidents at work or other problems, in which area he has more experience than I have and union members have more reason to be grateful to him than to me because I have not done such work.

5.30 pm

My right hon. Friend said that he has nothing against trade unions. I accept that. He said that we should not confuse collective bargaining with other things. I have read out the part of the Court of Appeal judgment which elides whatever difference there may have been between us. My right hon. Friend referred to the 1975 debate. In full context, that would probably prove a point that I would want to make, but there is no need to argue about it too much, because we can always return to the fact that the industrial tribunal and the Court of Appeal produced a judgment saying that the law was what I had believed it to be and what most people had believed it to be.

The question that we must put back to the Government is whether the Ullswater amendment clarifies the law or changes the law. I hope that the debate will persuade the Government Front Bench that its effect is to change the law. That point has obviously not been accepted by the Front Bench and it may take some time to do so, but that is the essential point.

If the general view is that the law is being changed by the Ullswater amendment, introduced on a procedural basis in a fairly unusual and abrupt way, I hope that my right hon. Friend will tell the House that he will in some way try to ensure that its effect will be at least suspended until there has been consultation.

I hope that whoever replies to the debate will answer this question: what consultation paper was available in public to the trade unions, the TUC, employers, the CBI, the Engineering Employers Federation and all the other employers' federations and associations before the Government decided on the terms of the Ullswater amendment? I have not been aware of one and I have not seen an open consultation paper on its contents in the press that I read.

One can argue that from 6 May to 24 May was only about two and a half weeks, but open consultation would still have been possible. I ask any hon. Member to intervene and tell me if he or she was aware of any open consultation on the Ullswater amendment.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): There was a fairly clear understanding of how things worked until the Court of Appeal judgment. That is what caused the difficulty. That is why the Government were right to introduce the Ullswater amendment to clear up the matter.

Mr. Bottomley: That may be so, but I remind the House that the question that I was putting was whether any hon. Member was aware of any open consultation between 6 May and 24 May when the Ullswater amendment was considered in the other place. I am not aware that hon. Members who have links with trade unions are rising. I am not aware that those who may have better links with employers are rising. In fact, I notice no movement anywhere.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) makes the point that everyone thought that the law allowed employers to do what two employers were told by the Court of Appeal was illegal. That may be so, but it is not a view which I share. However, my hon. Friend, in his creation of jobs, may have had a different experience. I do not think that employers previously believed that to be the law. I think that Associated British Ports and the newspaper group received legal advice saying that such action was worth a try and the industrial tribunal said that it was not worth a try.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. *[Interruption.]* One chooses one's friends. I put the point in the way that I wish to. The hon. Gentleman makes the point that there was no consultation. Precisely what does he think the purpose of that consultation would have been? Does he envisage that he might have changed his own mind? I have to say that I doubt it, in which case I am not sure what the purpose of that consultation would have been.

Mr. Bottomley: It is silly for people in the same party when they have a disagreement to resort to that sort of personal abuse which is uncharacteristic of Members of the House. I am aware that when I was a Minister my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) was one of those who thought that I was not doing the right thing on wages councils. As a member of the Conservative party, I do not think that we do the wrong thing when we speak up for those who may want to band together for collective strength. We may have differences and disagreements, but some kind of loyalty to each other is a reasonable thing for which to ask. If my hon. Friend thinks that I am not open to argument, he does not know me very well.

I shall repeat the question and then leave it. Who shows any manifestation of believing that the worth of union membership could be totally negated but not have that held as a deterrence of union membership, which is clearly unlawful?

There is no doubt that deterrence of union membership is unlawful. If I am wrong about that my hon. Friend will no doubt intervene. He rightly accepts the law and that is plainly the law.

Then comes the question whether we should allow the law to be changed to allow another purpose to overtake that purpose of deterring union membership. My argument is no, we should not.

My regret is that there are not more Conservative Members who have come up through trade unions who, speaking the sort of words and expressing the sort of thoughts that I have been doing, can represent those whom I have been representing here today.

It is a mistake for the trade unions to continue their strong links with the Labour party. That is one reason why we have an unbalanced debate. I hope that in time the Conservative party will show, in its actions as well as in its words, in what it does in the House as well as in what it says at election time, that it wants the support of working people, whether or not they are members of unions; that we want people to choose whether to join a union and that we shall maintain the law as it has been clearly stated since 1975 and that no one shall be deterred from union membership.

Mr. Leighton: If ever anyone wanted evidence of the need for a change of Government, the appalling way in which the Government are behaving on this issue is it. Only a Government with the arrogance that comes from 14 years in power, a Government who think that they can do what they like, would attempt to do what they are doing and in such a way, overturning the decisions of the courts and abusing parliamentary procedures. When it come to assaulting trade unions, the Government think that anything goes.

The amendment must be a violation of international agreements. It must be a breach of International Labour Organisation conventions because it is a direct assault on the freedom of association, which is a basic human right. It penalises and victimises citizens for what the Government appear to regard as the crime of collective bargaining.

Let us consider the case, mentioned by the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), of Associated Newspapers Ltd. *v.* Wilson. That company publishes the *Daily Mail* and similar associated papers and had recognised the National Union of Journalists since 1912. In 1989, the editors of the firm's three papers decided to derecognise the NUJ and to move from collectively agreed terms and conditions of employment to individual contracts.

Those on individual contracts received salaries that were 4·5 per cent. higher than those being paid under the collective agreement. Incidentally, that increase was backdated to 1989. The individual, Mr. Wilson—I emphasise the word "individual" because I have heard all the Government's rhetoric about how they are looking after the rights of the individual—claimed that, by paying him less and providing him with less favourable terms and conditions than those who had transferred to individual contracts, the firm had taken action short of dismissal against him which was penalising him for being a union member.

What is the law? Section 23(1) of the Employers Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 states that

"every employee shall have the right not to have action (short of dismissal) taken against him as an individual by his employer for the purposes of . . . preventing or deterring him from being or seeking to become a member of an independent trade union, or penalising him for doing so".

That is the law; that language has been in our law for two decades. It was introduced in the early 1970s, since when six anti-union Bills have been enacted without interfering with it.

In its judgment allowing the appeal, the Court of Appeal held that when terms offered under personal contracts were better than those available under a

collective agreement, with the aim of reducing the power of the union to the point where it was wholly negated, the purpose of the action was clearly to give effect to

"the wholly foreseeable consequence of deterring employees from being trade union members".

As such, it was an action taken to deter people from trade union membership within the meaning of section 23 of the Act. A similar judgment was made in the case of Associated British Ports.

That judgment was unanimous: all three judges concurred that the employer's action constituted unlawful discrimination. The law is clear; the employer's action breached Acts dating back to the early 1970s and the words that I have quoted have been consolidated in all the legislation that the Government have enacted since 1979. It is ludicrous for them to claim that the law is unclear and that the amendment is intended merely to clarify it. The truth is that the law is too clear for the Government. They do not want to clarify it; they want to change it, to the detriment of individual employees. It is all part of their vindictive attack on workers' rights and freedoms.

Surely, if there is any difficulty, the law should be clarified in the courts. We do not know whether this case is likely to go to the House of Lords. How is it possible to talk about clarifying the law when the Law Lords have yet to consider the matter? One cannot but be amazed and appalled by the Government's extraordinary behaviour: they are showing complete disrepect for the law and the courts. Within days of the judgment, before anyone had read the full transcript of the ruling and without waiting to see whether there would be an appeal to the House of Lords, they announced the tabling of an amendment to change the law because the judges had not done what the Government wanted them to do. They proposed immediate legislation, with none of the usual prior consultation with interested parties. Moreover, the text of the amendment was not available until the last possible moment before the debate.

I understand that the Standing Orders in the other place were suspended to allow the amendment to be dealt with in Committee, on Report and on Third Reading in a single day, which kept the House sitting until 2 am. What a way for the mother of Parliaments to behave; what an example to set other countries. Some of us are members of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and take part in seminars to explain to visitors the wonderful way in which our Parliament works and the rule of law in this country. I wonder whether we shall be sufficiently proud of this example to explain it to them.

The amendment is an attack on workers' freedom of association—on basic human rights and freedoms. The Minister has told us that it is all right for a worker to have a union card—that is a private matter—but, if that worker wants to use the union's facilities, he will be penalised. That would give bad employers the green light to victimise and penalise trade unionists. It would allow them to withhold pay increases from workers who refused to renounce union representation. Workers who bargained through their unions would lose all protection against discrimination and the powers of those unions would consequently be reduced. The unions would be negated —a word used by the hon. Member for Eltham.

The Government used to talk of reforming unions. It is now clear that they want to destroy them completely and to deny them their legitimate role. The Government are venting their spleen and malice on unions: they want to stack the cards against them and in favour of macho employers. The Government should be careful; show me a country without free trade unions and I will show you a dictatorship.

The Government should stop this vendetta against their own people. After six anti-trade union Acts, the unions cannot be blamed for the ghastly state of the British economy. Given the current state of the labour market, trade unions are more necessary than ever to give workers some protection and some rights in the workplace. Our people now recognise that: public opinion polls show that the unions are very popular and that workers want the protection that they afford.

This mean, spiteful, malicious amendment is a disgrace to Parliament. If it is passed, I hope that a future Labour Government will give priority to its repeal.

5.45 pm

Mr. Nicholls: Let me begin by declaring my interests in Hill and Smith Holdings, the NSCC, Port Enterprises Ltd., the Waterfront Partnership, the Howard de Walden Estates, MinOtels and Dunn and Baker.

The theme that runs through this debate is what the Conservative Government have tried to do in the trade union legislations that they have enacted since 1979. Although it seems narrow, the amendment raises some fundamental questions, as was pointed out by both the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) and my hon. Friend—as he wishes me to call him—the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley).

The debate has featured at least one red herring. There has been disagreement about whether the law is being clarified or changed. Obviously, to some extent, one man's change in the law is another's clarification; however, I see nothing wrong in saying that, although it is clear that the legislators originally intended the law to operate in a certain way, the law has now been found not to be operating in that way. At that stage, the House will need to make a decision. The circumstances are not unique, but relatively common. The House must say, "If that is the way in which the words come across literally, and it is not what we intended, we must take steps. Shall we accept that the law must be thus—although we never thought that it should be—or shall we change it?"

Usually, when such circumstances arise, Ministers are consulted. They normally reply that, if a suitable legislative vehicle existed, they might be able to do something; but such a vehicle can rarely be found when a clarification of the law is thought necessary. It just so happened that a Bill was going through the House whose long title suggested that it might be suitable: I see nothing wrong in principle with saying, "For once we have a suitable vehicle. Let us take advantage of it."

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I shall try not to intervene again, but my hon. Friend may be able to help me on the question of what the law was thought to be. I have failed to find any reference in any of the personnel management books and loose-leaf binders, or in any decisions made by industrial tribunals, employment appeal tribunals or the Court of Appeal, that suggests that those decisions came as a surprise. What makes my hon. Friend believe that the people involved considered it possible to negate the benefits of union membership without offending against subsection (1)*(a)* of what was section 23 of the 1978 Act?

Mr. Nicholls: I cannot begin to aspire to my hon. Friend's command of the sections and subsections. Moreover, it is clear that he has thoroughly researched the case law in the hope that it can help him with a particular proposition.

When the law is thought to be settled and definite, nothing can be found in case law, because the practitioners have made a correct assumption. What does happen from time to time is that, even when the legislation is believed to be operating in a certain way, it then goes to be tested in one court or another, and it turns out that what was thought to have been settled has not been settled after all.

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. Michael Forsyth): It may help the House if I explain that the employment appeal tribunal said that the section

"has caused and may well continue to cause problems . . . We share the difficulties which this Industrial Tribunal found in the wording of section 23(1)(a)."

Mr. Nicholls: It was wrong.

Mr. Forsyth: What was asked for was an indication of who had said that there was some difficulty in understanding the law.

Mr. Nicholls: What my hon. Friend the Minister has said is a perfectly correct statement of what the law's approach would have been in a situation such as this.

In effect, we have three tribunals. We have the tribunal of first instance—the industrial tribunal—the employment appeal tribunal and then the Court of Appeal. If three such tribunals can come to differing conclusions, whatever the law might be, it is obvious that it is far from clear, and that it needs to be clarified. The fact that that difficulty had not arisen before proves the point precisely. It was thought to be settled, there was a disagreement between the three tribunals, and it needs to be clarified.

Mr. Heald: Does my hon. Friend agree that the employment appeal tribunal is the most knowledgeable and skilled tribunal of any in this area, because it consists of a chairman who is a High Court judge and who handles those cases day in, day out, and representatives from both sides of industry? Will my hon. Friend accept from me, as a lawyer who was advising people on these issues at the time, that there was considerable complexity involved?

Mr. Nicholls: That is right. I too used to do a considerable amount of industrial relations law. I will probably be in hot water with the Court of Appeal if I say that if one is looking at a thorough working through of the complex issues involved, the employment appeal tribunal usually provides better guidance than most.

The plain fact is that, if three tribunals cannot agree, whatever else one might say about the law, it is not clear.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Before the hon. Gentleman took on all those impressive parliamentary consultancies that he mentioned, I understand that he used to practise as a solicitor. Does he not think that it might have been wiser for the Government to wait for a determination of the issue by the House of Lords before rushing headlong into this new legislation, or does he think that the employment appeal tribunal is a more useful guide to these issues than the House of Lords, which is the highest court in the country?

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. and learned Gentleman's deference as a silk to the House of Lords is truly impressive. I dealt with that point a moment ago. Even if the matter had gone to the House of Lords and it had decided one way or another, two things would still be apparent. First, it would be apparent that there had been a difference of opinion about the state of the law as it passed through the various appellate processes—so to say that the law was clear would not have been true; secondly, the House would still have had to return to the question whether it believed that the effect of the law should be as the courts have decided.

At that stage, one has to look for an appropriate vehicle to change the law and, by then, the vehicle may well have gone on. There was a clear difference of opinion among the various tribunals, and the House now has an opportunity to say whether the law should be clarified in the way in which it was always thought that it would be interpreted. That is the proposition, and there is nothing wrong with it.

The point of principle underlying this amendment is what we are in the business of doing. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) dealt with his point of principle somewhat late in his speech, but with engaging frankness. He stated baldly that this is about the belief that more trade unions would be good for employees. It is a perfectly reasonable proposition, and for somebody who is sponsored by a trade union it is probably a predictable and inevitable conclusion to reach. However, should the House believe that more trade unions would automatically be a good idea for the people of this country and for employees? I do not necessarily see it that way.

This legislation is not anti-trade union. How could it be anti-trade union, when it is from a Government who enacted the right not to be refused employment on the basis of trade union membership? It is worth reminding ourselves that it was a Conservative Government who introduced that legislation.

We know that the Labour party is opposed to this amendment. How long will that opposition last? The background to this has included five employment Bills, and we should look at the things that the Labour party has opposed to the rooftops. It has opposed secret ballots before the election of trade union officers, secondary picketing, secondary action, pre-strike ballots and the idea of a postal ballot. It is not long ago that it was opposing to the nth degree the idea that the closed shop—that monstrosity—should be abolished.

In due course, the Labour party suddenly decided that it was not against all those things after all. We must look at this proposition in that light. It would be entirely inconsistent for a Government to enshrine in law the idea that one should not be refused employment because of trade union membership and then to indulge in this piece of legislation if it satisfied the description given by Opposition Members.

Of course trade unions should be entitled to combine in their own interests. However, recognition is a matter for trade union members. It cannot be right for them to impose recognition on employers simply because trade unions decide that that is what they want. I apologise if, in a misplaced attempt at humour, I upset my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham, but, as one Conservative to another, I find it difficult to see how one can go along with the idea that a trade unionist should be entitled to impose recognition on an employer.

That cannot possibly be right. It must be up to an employer who owns, runs and knows his business to decide

whether to recognise a trade union for particular purposes. My hon. Friend the Member for Eltham obviously finds that a bizarre proposition; I do not.

Mr. Leighton: It is not about whether an employer can derecognise, because, under the law, he can. The judge has said that he should not offer a bribe to a certain section of workers to do so.

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Gentleman can put it in those terms if he wishes.

Mr. Leighton: It was not me—it was the judge.

Mr. Nicholls: One of the things that we are trying to cope with today is the fact that different judges and three different tribunals see things—

Mr. Leighton: Three judges.

Mr. Nicholls: It is touching to see the Labour party say how much it wants to support judges. The Labour party supports judges only when they say what it wants them to say. The hon. Gentleman is being highly selective in the judges that he is prepared to agree with. It is tempting to wish that it would go to the House of Lords—I say this in a moment of jocularity—simply so that he might have to come back in due course and say how much he supports the judges in the House of Lords.

There is an ambiguity, and it needs to be clarified. This is about the proposition advanced by the Opposition and my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham—that, once trade union members decide that they wish to be collectively responsible, it should be imposed on employers, and that any paid differentials which come about can be dismissed as a bribe or a douceur. The thread running through this issue is not that more trade unions are good, but that it should be open to the people involved to make up their own minds—that includes employers—whether they will accept the recognition that unions may demand of them in a particular situation. I do not find that an ignoble principle—it is a theme that has run through our legislation since 1979.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham and I were members of the Government together, trade union legislation was being passed. My hon. Friend had day-to-day responsibility for trade union matters, as I also did for a time. Perhaps we can agree on one thing. When I saw the themes running through such legislation, I did not feel that I as a Minister was being asked to do something so appalling that I should resign. Hearing my hon. Friend speak, with some eloquence, I wonder how he managed to stay on board at times if he felt so strongly about the legislation that we were introducing.

6 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley *rose*—

Mr. Nicholls: I shall now give my hon. Friend the opportunity to make the resignation speech that he denied himself at the time.

Mr. Bottomley: First, I do not recall industrial relations legislation being passed when I was a Minister at the Department of Employment, although my memory may be at fault. Secondly, nor do I recall in the first 14 years of Conservative government any proposal to change the law so as to negate completely the benefits of union membership, in flat contradiction of section 23(1)(a)—the industrial tribunal's finding of fact.

Mr. Nicholls: Let me cheer up my hon. Friend at once. If he is casting his mind back to find out when he was an Employment Minister, I can tell him that it was between September 1984 and January 1986. Mercifully, I can agree that, at that precise point in time, no employment legislation received the force of law. If he wants to point out that he voted against employment legislation when he was in another Department and somehow remained a member of the Government, I shall accept what he says.

However, my hon. Friend is making a serious point, which needs to be dealt with. The amendment will not negate all the benefits of being in a trade union. We are all aware of examples of people being members of trade unions and presumably paying their dues willingly, but their employer is not able to negotiate their pay. My hon. Friend might believe that the only benefit of being in a trade union is the ability to negotiate pay, but there is much more to it than that.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Does not the hon. Gentleman realise that the Government are in the business of improving industrial relations, but that the legislation is a recipe for disaster? I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman has ever worked in a factory alongside people who are members of a different union. What happens if one person earns £2 an hour more than another for exactly the same work merely because he is not in a trade union? Surely no hon. Member could accept such a situation in British industry.

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Gentleman speaks with great sincerity, but I should have more sympathy with what he is saying and be more likely to agree if, since 1979, the Opposition had not opposed every trade union reform that we have introduced. The Labour party's position on all our trade union reforms has been that it agrees with the reform before last, is not quite sure about the last one and believes that the present one is an outrage. That is the way the party presented itself to the electorate.

In a practical sense, I accept what the hon. Gentleman says. Such a situation might cause difficulties, but working life is difficult. Is he leaping from that proposition to saying that the state should be in the business of fettering an employer and stopping him offering a salary structure which he finds makes his business work? If the hon. Gentleman believes that, he would impose a restriction on employers and businesses and prevent them from offering jobs which last and succeed.

In the end, the one thing that unites—or should unite—all parties, although I sometimes wonder whether it does, is that we want businesses to succeed. That is what the amendment is all about, and that is why it is entirely right.

Mr. Alex Carlile: When the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) began his speech, he read out what sounded like a litany of private consultancies that he holds. If he were told by you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or by those who have such authority that, because of those consultancies, they would deduct all the money that he receives as a consultant from his salary as a Member of the

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House plus one penny piece, I bet my bottom dollar that he would give up those consultancies in a flash. This proposal is about something very similar.

The proposal is an attempt to bribe or, to use the words of Lord Justice Dillon, to offer a douceur, or sweetener, to union members. It is not a sweetener to try to persuade them not to be members of a trade union—their right to be in a trade union remains, of course, enshrined in law—but it is an attempt to allow employers to offer a sweetener to make employees unable to exercise their rights as members of a trade union. That is offensive.

I regret that it was far from a privilege to listen to the hon. Member for Teignbridge when compared with the speech made by the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley). It was a privilege to listen to the hon. Member for Eltham because I believe—I hope that the Minister of State will reflect on this—that it represented the authentic voice of trade unionists who do vote or have voted for the Conservatives. I believe that Conservative trade unionists will find this proposal as offensive as trade unionists who vote for any Opposition party. The Government have signally failed to recognise that, perhaps because of the indecent speed with which the proposal was inserted in the Bill in another place.

The amendment makes doubtfully proper use of both Houses of Parliament. It is insupportable to suggest that it could be regarded as just; and its legality is questionable in the context of international law.

As for the propriety of their use of the House and of another place, I wonder why the Government thought it proper to introduce the clause with indecent haste when it was known that the employers who lost in the Court of Appeal were intent on going to the House of Lords on appeal. Why have not the Government waited for the determination of the House of Lords? Why have they sought to diminish the courts, which, in other contexts, they seek—or pretend to seek—to support?

The appeal decision was not the idiosyncratic decision of a radical who had accidentally found his way into the Court of Appeal. It was the unanimous decision of Lord Justice Dillon, Lord Justice Butler-Sloss and Lord Justice Farquharson, two men and one woman who are very experienced in the application of employment law, lawyers of eminence and brilliance who were not taken by surprise in having to reach such a finding.

Why do the Government seek to arrogate to themselves the role of a legislative Court of Appeal when the appellate remedies provided by our courts system have not been exhausted? Is it a precedent for the future? If so, it is a fine demonstration of the fact, now accepted not only by my party but by the Labour party, that there is a need to write down some constitutional limits. It is a good example for the argument that it is high time that we had a constitutional court, or its equivalent, so that we are not driven to seek remedies from distant courts in the international arena in order to assert individual liberties and rights.

How can the Government say that they were taken by surprise by the view expressed by the Court of Appeal and the industrial tribunal in the two cases involved? Where did the Government get their legal advice and what legal advice did they obtain? I ask the Minister of State to tell us when he answers the debate where in the past the Government obtained the legal advice that left them so surprised by the findings of the Court of Appeal. They certainly did not go to John Hendy QC, one of the leading employment lawyers in the country, who appeared for Mr. Wilson before the Court of Appeal. Had they done so, they would have found it far from surprising that the Court of Appeal should reach that conclusion. I do not pretend to be an expert on the subject, but I can tell the Minister of State—perhaps the Department of Employment needs to learn this—that there are plenty of employment lawyers apart from Mr. Hendy who have long believed that the decision of the Court of Appeal on behalf of Mr. Wilson and in the other case that has been mentioned were entirely predictable and were an application of the law as it was understood.

The hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle), who speaks in the House on employment issues with great skill and authority, referred earlier to the decision of the employment appeal tribunal—that, at least, should appeal to the hon. Member for Teignbridge—in the case of Discount Tobacco and Confectionery Ltd. *v.* Armitage, which was reached in 1990, nearly three years ago, and publicly reported in the "Industrial Relations Law Reports" for 1990 at page 15 onwards. Mr. Justice Knox, giving the judgment of the tribunal, said that it would "emasculate"—that is a strong word—our understanding in this country of the right to be a member of a trade union if it could be successfully argued that there was a distinction to be drawn between membership of the union and resorting to the services of a union officer to elucidate and negotiate the terms of employment. He said that the right to be a member of a trade union

"would be reduced almost to vanishing point"

if that distinction, which was argued for in the case but rejected, were to exist in law. He continued:

"it would only be just the fact that a person was a member of a union without regard to the consequences of that membership that would be the subject matter of that statutory provision, and it sems to us that to construe that paragraph so narrowly would really be to emasculate the provision altogether".

In Mr. Wilson's case Lord Justice Dillon said that that judgment was "unquestionably correct". Lord Justice Dillon did not seem to think that the interpretation had been questioned in the period between the Armitage case and the decision in the Wilson case.

Mr. Nicholls *rose*——

Mr. Carlile: I shall give way in a moment.

Why do the Government claim surprise, when they knew the effect of the decision in the Armitage case? If they had considered the effect of Armitage at all they could only have concluded that the law was as Lord Justice Dillon declared it to be. In my view, for the Government to say that they were taken by surprise is a pretence. I do not accept for one moment that that was the sincerely held view of the Government when Lord Ullswater spoke, or that it is their view now.

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. and learned Gentleman defends his fellow judges with passion and sincerity. So that we can understand where he and his party stand on the matter, will he tell me whether he supports the right of a trade union to be recognised for collective bargaining purposes in a company if it represents a significant proportion of the relevant part of the work force, even if the employers do not wish to recognise it?

6.15 pm

Mr. Carlile: I believe that the law must fall within article 11 of the European convention on human rights, as I shall explain in a moment.

Mr. Nicholls: Answer the question.

Mr. Carlile: If the hon Gentleman is more patient than usual, he will see that his question will be answered in due time.

Now I turn to whether the proposal can be regarded as just. How could it possibly be regarded as just, or as fair? Again, we must consider the words of Lord Justice Dillon. Whether we talk about a douceur, a sweetener or a bribe —call it what you will, Mr. Deputy Speaker—that is the effect of the measure. It is intended to allow an employer to offer a sweetener to emasculate the effect of being a trade union member.

The Secretary of State said that, unless what an employer did was reasonable, he would not get away with it. However—inadvertently, I am sure—the right hon. Gentleman misrepresented what the new provision says. I refer the Minister of State to subsection (3)(a) of the new clause, which would provide that the purpose for which the employer took the relevant action would be regarded as having been taken

"to further a change in his relationship with all or any class of his employees".

The employer's action would be valid unless the tribunal considered

"that the action was such as no reasonable employer would take".

So it is not for the employer to prove that his action was reasonable; the burden is on the employee to prove that no reasonable employer in the land could reasonably have taken such action. That is a heavy burden, quite different from the Secretary of State's explanation.

Furthermore, that is not the end of the matter. Subsection (3) also says:

"the tribunal shall regard the purpose mentioned in paragraph (a) . . . as the purpose for which the employer took the action, unless it considers that the action was such as no reasonable employer would take".

It then adds the words:

"having regard to the purpose mentioned in paragraph (a)."

That means that so long as the employer's purpose was

"to further a change in his relationship with all or any class of his employees",

his action is most unlikely to be regarded as unreasonable. The courts will have to consider the meaning of that last part of the proviso to subsection (3).

If my understanding of the provision is wrong, I ask the Minister of State, when he replies to the debate, to tell me why. At the very least, will he explain to the House why the words

"having regard to the purpose mentioned in paragraph (a)"

are contained in the subsection and what they mean? He probably knows that since a recent decision, the courts may have regard to what Ministers say in the House. I believe that the courts will be extremely puzzled by the words that I have quoted unless the Minister gives some clarification, no doubt based on advice, of what they mean. A failure to give such clarification will be regarded by me—and, I suspect, by others—as deliberate and as an acceptance of the fact that the Government are trying to circumscribe even the test of reasonableness.

Finally, is what the Government propose legal? Did the Government take independent legal advice as to whether the proposal is legal in terms of their obligations in international law? Will the Minister at least tell us whether they obtained advice from the Attorney-General as to whether the measure was consistent with those obligations? In particular, on what basis do the Government argue that their proposal falls within article 11 of the European convention on human rights? The words of Mr. Justice Knox in the Armitage case, which I quoted earlier, will remain good domestic law, even after the implementation of this proposal. Mr. Justice Knox's judgment makes it quite clear that to circumscribe the rights appurtenant to trade union membership is to restrict the right to trade union membership itself.

I do not know whether the Minister of State has ever read article 11 of the European convention on human rights. The convention is only a little book—even the Minister could read it before bedtime. Paragraph 2 of article 11, so far as it is relevant, says:

"No restrictions shall be placed on the exercise of these rights other than such as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health of morals or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others."

How can the Government say that this provision does not amount to a restriction on the exercise of the right to membership of a trade union? How can they claim that it is necessary in a democratic society? Do they say that it is necessary for the protection of public morals or to prevent disorder or crime? Certainly they cannot, with any justification, claim that it will protect the rights and freedom of others.

I know that the Minister of State is not enthusiastic about international organisations, although in this regard he sometimes tries to hide his fire under a bushel. Even so, he must agree that it is very important that the House of Commons should not demonstrate contempt for international law. Have the Government considered the international law implications of what they are doing? I believe that they may have failed to do so. If they have, I believe that they have got it wrong and I ask them to reconsider their position.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): I should like to begin by declaring interests in Dixons plc, the British Fibreboard Association, the National Training Federation, United Framlingham Farmers Ltd. and Writtle College.

I listened with great care to the speech of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), who opened for the Opposition. The hon. Gentleman twice mentioned dates. He quoted words of Winston Churchill dating back to 1908, and he made use of the fact that one of the agreements referred to in the two cases from which this amendment springs dates from 1912. Surely that shows that it is time for a re-examination of the issue. By quoting from legislation and agreements drawn up at the beginning of the century, when we are within seven years of its end, the hon. Gentleman showed that he is one of the unreconstructed members of the Labour party.

In my view, the significant aspect of this matter is the need for employers to be flexible. As was said during Prime Minister's Question Time today, we are in a highly international competitive, single world market. We are competing not just with the town or city up the motorway, or even with France, but with the rest of the world. Thus, it is absolutely essential that employers be sufficiently

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flexible to meet all needs. A bitter truth that we sometimes delude ourselves into refusing to accept is that industry and commerce do not exist for the purpose of providing jobs. Businesses exist for the purpose of engaging in economic activity, which provides people with work. When the activity ceases to be economic, the work disappears. Indeed, we have seen the disappearance of too many jobs in those circumstances.

I do not believe, and I do not make the case, that every employer in this country is perfect. There are some very bad employers. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I am the first to recognise that fact, but I dissent strongly from the view, which I suspect is held by those who are momentarily supporting my words, that that law can be used to correct all the bad practices of employers. It is the sharp teeth of competition that encourages employers to adopt good employment practices and, thereby, minimise disruption and maximise productivity.

Before becoming a Member of Parliament I spent some time in training and management development. With that experience, I believe very strongly that it is in the interests of all employers to adopt employment practices that minimise disruption, minimise the number of employees who leave, and maximise the ability of everyone to contribute, to develop personal skills and to be rewarded for doing so. Otherwise, businesses fold under the pressures of competition. But it is for the employer to decide how these issues should be addressed; it is not for this House to legislate.

I support the principle of minimum employment protection legislation, but this amendment is giving employers flexibility to amend their arrangements with individual employees to meet their needs.

Ms. Eagle: I have been listening with interest to the hon. Gentleman's comments about international competition and the pressure that it puts on those who organise industry in this country. Will the hon. Gentleman admit that when all restaints are removed, by virtue of the fact that there are minimum employment rights and there is no trade union organisation, competition is achieved by lowering wages, by introducing terms and conditions that exploit employees and by generally impoverishing the work force, whereas it should be achieved by having good research and development, good sales techniques and high-quality products?

Mr. Paice: High-quality research and development and products are obviously vital in any market. I do not accept, however, that low wages are necessary to the achievement of maximum competitiveness. What matters is not the amount of money that is paid to the individual but what each unit of production costs. Into that equation must go the whole question of investment in technology —machinery and whatever else is required for production —as well as the overlaying costs of employment, the social chapter and work force flexibility. I do not accept that low unit costs can be achieved simply by reducing wages. Unit costs, rather than the number of pounds that an employer receives per week, are the key to competitiveness.

As I have already said, I am the first to accept that there are bad employers who seek to achieve competitiveness by lowering rates of pay. In the long run, however, such employers are doomed to defeat because they are ducking the key issues. If they pay too low a wage, they will have problems with their work force. Their staff will be discontented and many of them will leave to go to other jobs for better wages. Ultimately, such behaviour will cost employers money and cause them to wish that they had adopted more advanced and sensible employment practices.

6.30 pm

Mr. Graham: How in God's name can we ensure good industrial relations if we introduce an amendment that will divide the work force by enabling employers to say, "If you are not a member of a trade union, we will pay you extra"? How can that create better employment relations in Great Britain and get Britain back to producing goods? It makes no sense deliberately to divide the work force in that way, and it seems to me that the Government are wasting the time of the House with their mad and stupid measures.

Mr. Paice: Clearly there is a difference of opinion as to what the amendment does. I do not believe that it will necessarily divide the work force as the hon. Gentleman suggests. I agree with the point that he made in an intervention in the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls), which was that the concept of two people who work alongside each other doing an identical job but earning different rates of pay is bound to lead to discontent. But the amendment refers to the tribunal regarding the purpose mentioned in paragraph (b) as the purpose for which the employer took the action

"unless it considers that the action was such as no reasonable employer would take having regard to the purpose mentioned in paragraph (a)"

I submit that no reasonable employer would embark on a course of action that would lead to two people doing identical jobs being paid different rates.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South East): Where has the hon. Gentleman been these last few years? He talks about good and bad employers. Is he not aware that in Britain today thousands upon thousands of working people are being subjected to injustice every day of their working lives? There are bad employers who are making people redundant or placing them on temporary contracts. People are starting one day and being sacked the next. They receive no unemployment pay and no sickness benefit and have no rights whatever. People are working in those circumstances because they are in fear of the legislation that the Government have introduced. Why cannot the hon. Gentleman see that the Bill and the amendment will exacerbate the problems with which working people are already faced?

Mr. Paice: The hon. Gentleman was not listening to what I said. I said quite clearly that I accept that there are bad employers in this country—although I suggest that redundancies are more likely to be the result of the economic circumstances facing a particular business at a particular time than the mark of a bad employer. I do not believe that the amendment would have the effect that the hon. Gentleman believes it would.

In addition to the importance of competitiveness to which I referred earlier, it must be remembered that the whole concept of working practices is changing fast—not only because of the international situation but because of people's changing priorities and desires. I refer, for

example, to the development of part-time work, which is often sought by employees rather than imposed by companies. The attitude to weekends—and, dare I say it, Sundays—is changing. Some mothers wish to work for only a few hours a day while their children are at school. Such developments have caused British businesses to consider more flexible working arrangements. Employers therefore need to be more flexible.

We have moved away from the situation that pertained 20 or 30 years ago when massed ranks of people, all of them doing identical jobs, came out of the factories. Of course such businesses still exist, but they are changing fast. The vast majority of people are now employed in much smaller companies and there is a much greater range of responsibilities and job functions within those companies. That is why I believe that the flexibility embodied in the amendment is essential.

Mr. Jimmy Boyce (Rotherham): Does not the hon. Gentleman realise that what he is saying would ring more true if the proposals included protection against the bad employers whom he recognises exist? We could accept much of the hon. Gentleman's argument if the proposals encompassed such protection, but in fact the opposite is the case.

Mr. Paice: No. The minimum legislation to which I referred is already in place. We are discussing a particular amendment today, but a number of employment Acts have been introduced during the Government's term of office. Those Acts have drawn the sting from the impositions made by Labour and other Governments on employers while leaving in place the minimum standards of employment protection that I believe are essential.

Mr. Eric Clarke (Midlothian): I have spent much of my life negotiating deals nationally with nationalised industry. An important aspect of such negotiations was the discipline that we could bring to the negotiating table. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that it is easy for a major employer to discuss with the trade union movement? I have also spent my life negotiating and discussing with my members the deals that have been reached. We had to sell them the idea. The argument is that it is easier that way. Moreover, it was good for industry and good for production. One had a sense of fairness. Everyone knew exactly where he stood.

The hon. Gentleman seeks to turn the clock back. He suggests that the amendment is fair because it gives the employer a better deal, but employees are not getting a better deal, are they? No one in the House could sell that argument to a group of people——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The hon. Gentleman is now making a speech.

Mr. Clarke: Can I just say——

Madam Deputy Speaker: No. That is enough.

Mr. Paice: The hon. Gentleman talks about reasonable employers and about benefits to employees. It is a sad reflection on our society that we still refer to employers and employees as if they were on opposing sides. I accept what the hon. Gentleman said about the benefits of trade unions being able to negotiate on behalf of a number of members and to reach agreement with the management of a nationalised industry—although I suggest that nationalised industries are perhaps not the best examples of the success of the process—and then to go back and sell to their members the benefits of a package that has been negotiated.

I do not think that I have ever said anything in my political life to suggest that I do not support the principle of trade unions or the right of employees to belong to trade unions if they so wish. I do, indeed, believe in those principles. I also believe, however, that it is in the interests of employers to be able to adjust their bargaining arrangements with individual employees to meet the needs not only of their business but of those employees, who may wish to work certain hours, undertake certain training and so on. A whole gamut of factors now comes into play.

We are not today faced with a situation in which everybody in a business works the same number of hours doing the same job. That was commonplace years ago. In the evolving world of the last decade of this century and into the next, every employer who wants to achieve the competitiveness that is required and wishes to meet the aspirations of many of his employees must have the flexibility that the amendment provides.

Ms Jean Corston (Bristol, East): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in the debate. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) that the amendment will ensure, in the employment context, that all forms of bribery and coercion will be lawful. It is a spiteful amendment which will undermine the rights of trade union members.

It is also an affront to normal parliamentary procedure in the manner of its introduction, for it represents an amendment of settled law. It will have the effect of negating trade union membership. It is clear that parties to the action would seek recourse to the House of Lords, which is supposed to be the highest judicial authority in the land and the decisions of which are binding on all lower courts, including the employment appeal tribunal. Those facts must be within the knowledge of the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls), who is a practising solicitor.

The Conservative party says that it is not against trade union membership. Conservative Ministers have said over the years, while introducing one piece of repressive legislation after another, that they were simply giving unions back to their members.

Labour Members see the legislation for what it is—an attempt to turn the industrial relations clock back to 1906. I make no apology for mentioning that date because if Conservative Members could find a way round the immunity from prosecution for torts committed in contemplation or furtherance of a trade dispute, I am sure that they would do so.

The amendment will ensure that trade union membership will be positively discouraged. Individuals will face the choice of accepting a pay cut or signing a new personal contract. That will happen under coercion and, in the process, they will be required to surrender the right to union representation. Such a choice cannot be said to extend the rights of employees. We recall that the Conservative manifesto of 1992 stated:

"We will take measures to give individuals greater freedom in choosing a union."

Instead, the amendment will give employers greater freedom to take vindictive action against trade union members. Nowhere was that better illustrated than in a company called J. W. Arrowsmith Ltd of Bristol. The

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factory is located in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo), though many of the employees live in my constituency.

Arrowsmith was a well-established printing company with no history of industrial unrest. There was never a strike, although there was a lock-out 13 years ago over a pay claim. But in 1988, employees were asked to take a pay cut of between 20 and 25 per cent., representing about £50 a week for most crafts people. That was agreed, to save the company.

Early in 1991, the company decided to discontinue the national agreements between the BPIF, the British Printing Industries Federation, which represented the employers, and the GPMU, the Graphical, Printing and Media Union, which represented the work force. That was supposed to take effect on 1 January 1992, and obviously it meant having an in-house agreement. So there was at least an element of collectivism in that there was an agreement between the people employed and the employer.

The company refused to enter into negotiations at the end of 1992 for the 1993 agreement, saying that it could not afford an increase because of the high cost of overtime. The company then reneged on a holiday pay agreement. In April, the GPMU decided to involve the company in the national pay claim, which was for £6·05 a week on basic pay and an extra day's holiday. That would have represented just under 3 per cent. The company refused that claim, so there was a dispute. Most other companies in the BPIF signed.

6.45 pm

In accordance with Conservative-initiated legislation, a legal ballot was held and, by 98 to 14, it was agreed that industrial action short of a strike would be undertaken. They decided on a work to rule, the effect of which was that no overtime would be worked. One would have expected the employer to be pleased about that. After all, one of its reasons for not giving a pay rise was that overtime cost so much.

Three days later, the company issued a warning letter. It concerned anybody going on strike or doing anything outside the terms of a contract of employment collectively negotiated and agreed. The warning letter was followed on 26 April by departmental meetings addressed by Victoria Arrowsmith-Brown who, for all purposes, was the employer, informing them that if they did not sign a letter dissociating themselves from the action, they would be dismissed. They then received dismissal notices.

Hon. Members will find the terms of the dismissal notice interesting, bearing in mind the amendment that is before the House. The dismissal letter said:

"Industrial action short of a strike commenced on Thursday April 22 and you were asked to dissociate yourself from it and to give an undertaking that you would not participate in it. You declined to do that and you have therefore participated in industrial action which has disrupted production. By participating in that industrial action you have been, and still are, in repudiatory breach of your contract of employment. The company accepts your breach as terminating your employment with immediate effect. It is also accepting breaches of contract by other employees who have also been, and are, participating in industrial action, as terminating their employment. Your employment having ended, your form P45 and any money due to you will follow shortly."

The same notices were issued to staff who were absent through sickness, to those on holiday, to women on maternity leave and to an employee who had given 43 years' service and was due to retire the following day.

The following day, the workers were locked out. On 1 May they received new contracts containing similar pay rates to the previous year, a pay freeze for two years, lower overtime rates, lower shift rates and—a real sticking point—no recognition of any trade union and no representation by a trade union. The deadline for signing was 14 May. Three members of the trade union signed and returned to work. One other returned on 24 May, and he is on a three-month contract terminable at one day's notice.

It is important to remember that the company told employees on 1 May, when they were offered new contracts, that the company was willing to employ them only on the terms and conditions of employment which I summarised. The letter went on:

"No other terms and conditions will form part of your contract and, in particular, no term in any collective agreement which may have been reached by, or on behalf of, the Company with any union representing you will form part of the contract which is now being offered to you."

It went on to make it clear that the contract was exclusively individual.

As a result of the amendment that we are debating, Arrowsmith—assuming that it is a bad employer—would be able lawfully to differentiate between employees in terms of rates of pay. To date, the company has lost several contracts, many more are threatened and production is virtually nil. That employer seems to have had all the foresight and long-term planning of a Kamikaze pilot. The employees are not on strike, have never been on strike and have never threatened to strike.

The whole tragic and scandalous story reveals the way in which Conservatives condone, even encourage, behaviour by employers that is in breach of all accepted civilised standards. What will be the result if the amendment—and the nods and winks that accompany it—becomes law? What will the future hold for people in Bristol who cannot get income support, who cannot get maternity fund payments through the social fund and who cannot receive unemployment pay, even though the letter that I quoted said that they were dismissed? The employer will not confirm to the Department of Employment that they have been dismissed.

The effect of all that is that those people who at least understand what collective provision is about, and who are showing some form of support and solidarity to each other, will be able to be picked off because no one will refuse a pay rise at the end of the day.

Mr. Paice: I know nothing about the specific case to which the hon. Lady refers. However, I suggest that taking an individual example is a poor basis for any legislative action. More importantly, has not the hon. Lady made my case for me? She said that, since the dispute has arisen, the company has lost many orders and production is virtually at a standstill. That spells a dismal future for the company. Does that not demonstrate my point that a good employer will recognise that he must operate in a way that minimises disruption? I am sorry that employees will suffer if the company goes to the wall. But the company will also suffer—it will pay the price for handling its work force badly.

Ms Corston: The hon. Gentleman makes my point for me. If we were proceeding simply on the basis of one example, it would be outrageous. But that is exactly what we are doing—we are proceeding on the basis of what three learned judges, who are fully conversant with employment law, decided in one case. It is exactly the same as one example of an employer defying all of the decent standards. That is happening under the present law.

What the Government are doing—I presume that the hon. Gentleman will condone this in the Lobby tonight—is making it easier to negate trade union membership by offering sweetners. We are used to seeing sweetners in legislation from the Conservative Government, but the Bill extends them so that workers can be set against other workers—workers alongside each other will get different pay rates.

In terms of international labour obligations, the TUC said—and I agree with this—that the Government's action is in breach of International Labour Organisation convention No. 98, which provides for the right to organise and collective bargaining. The general principle of the convention is that no person should be prejudiced in his or her employment by reason of trade union membership or legitimate trade union activities. It is not simply a matter of a few bad employers because such behaviour undermines good employers—good employers can be undercut by those who pay below the agreed rates. What does that do for decent civilised standards and those companies which the hon. Gentleman considers to be good employers? It gives an employer a green light to treat his work force in that way.

The amendment has implications for the whole economic well-being of our country. We continue to hear Conservative Members say that they want the recession to end. We all want the recession to end. We all welcome real signs of recovery, but that is based on confidence not only in the City but in every home. Confidence depends on the ability to plan for the foreseeable future. How can people take out a mortgage, buy a car or enter into a hire purchase agreement if they have a three-month contract that is determinable at one day's notice?

It is time that the Government stopped substituting sound bites for sound policy. Conservative Members would do well to join the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) in voting against the amendment tonight; otherwise they must accept that the Government's declaration of wanting a classless society that is at ease with itself and in which there is real choice for individuals is absolutely nothing but weasel words.

Mr. Thurnham: This debate is certainly generating a great deal of light and heat. Most of the light is on the Conservative Benches, and most of the heat and confusion is on the Labour Benches.

I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on his new appointment. I am glad that he has been able to make his debut by speaking on this excellent Bill.

I regret that I did not have the opportunity to speak earlier on this Bill or serve on the Standing Committee. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on his role in taking the Bill through the Standing Committee and ensuring that it is the important and valuable Bill that it is.

I am delighted that we have this amendment. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) said that it is a savage attack on freedom of association, but I cannot see what could be more reasonable. The amendment as introduced by Viscount Ullswater is couched in reasonable terms. It says:

"the tribunal shall regard the purpose mentioned . . . as the purpose for which the employer took the action, unless it considers that the action was such as no reasonable employer would take".

I cannot understand how the amendment could be construed as it has been by Labour Members.

I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) is not here because I should like to take up some of his points. He said that he was not against individual contracts for senior people. I do not see why we must distinguish in that way and say that something is all right for senior people but not all right for other people. We should be able to have individual contracts right the way through. The whole purpose of the Bill is to ensure that employers and employees can reach individual bargaining arrangements. It in no way challenges the right of individuals to be members of a trade union.

Mr. Michael Clapham (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the Ullswater amendment gives not only the possibility of derecognising by virtue of individual contracts but the opportunity for employers to switch bargaining rights from one trade union to another trade union, thereby negating the freedom of choice of the employees whose bargaining rights are transferred?

Mr. Thurnham: If the hon. Gentleman had waited, I was about to come to that point. The law was never meant to interfere with the decisions of employers on what bargaining arrangements best meet their requirements. It is an employer's right to decide, in the light of the needs and circumstances of his business, how he wants to negotiate with his staff. The law should not put obstacles in the way of employers who want to move from collective bargaining and introduce individual pay negotiations and personal contracts.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) seemed to advocate—it was clear that he is a member of the legal profession—that people should continue to appeal at enormous cost and, undoubtedly, generate a lawyer's beanfeast rather than have the Government do what is obviously sensible and clarify the law as quickly as possible, in view of the fact that some doubt has arisen. My hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert) said that the Labour party is paid for by the trade unions.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras told us about his grandfather and his father and went into the history of legislation going back to 1912. That legislation is all antique—it is not relevant to the modern world. He referred to Japan. I wonder whether he has had an opportunity to read "The Machine that Changed the World", which makes it clear that individual arrangements can lead to much higher productivity figures. The hon. Gentleman is looking strained.

Mr. Dobson: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, generally speaking, productivity in German industry is greater than it is here and that the value of exports of manufactured goods per head of population is considerably higher in Germany than it is here? Does he also accept that it is exceedingly commonplace for there to be

[Mr. Dobson]

collective bargaining in German industry? The Germans believe that it enhances productivity and efficiency, and all the evidence shows that it does.

Mr. Thurnham: There is higher productivity in organisations all round the world where employers and employees are free to negotiate agreements to their own advantage. I recommend that the hon. Gentleman should go along the Corridor to the Library, ask for a copy of the "Machine that Changed the World" and read it. It was written by three lecturers from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and paid for by this Government, the American Government and others in order to find out what happened in Japan. It is remarkable how it shows improvements in productivity.

7 pm

The hon. Gentleman, when opening for the Opposition, cited the docks industry and the old Fleet street printing industry, as if they were examples of exactly what we should have. Those industries were riddled with restrictive practices and the hon. Gentleman voted against every piece of legislation introduced by this Government to clear out those practices. Perhaps he will say now whether he has changed his mind about his opposition to that legislation which has helped to make this country so much more productive now than it ever was in the past. *[Laughter.]* It is not a laughing matter.

Mr. Dobson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Thurnham: No. The docks were riddled with restrictive practices, yet the hon. Gentleman did not support the Government's legislation to sort them out. How could the country achieve the necessary productivity and international trade if——

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Thurnham: The hon. Gentleman has just walked into the Chamber, so I suggest that he sits down and listens to the debate——

Mr. Lewis: Give way.

Mr. Thurnham: ——rather than going on any longer.

Mr. Lewis: Give way.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Members know quite well that if the Member who has the Floor does not give way they must resume their seat.

Mr. Thurnham: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. it is reprehensible for Opposition Members to wander into the debate and try to intervene when they have not been here throughout the debate to listen to the points being made.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras spoke about the *Daily Mail*. Perhaps he should remember the old *Daily Herald*. Was it not that newspaper that the Labour party wanted to see exist? He forgets that newspapers are bought by individuals. It is an individual contract, so to speak, when individuals buy newspapers. That must run throughout industry. Industry must rely on individual agreements. Newspapers are bought by individuals who decide to buy them. In the same way, an employer should be free to pay more or less for an employee.

The Labour party forgets that the amendment is all about pay increases. Labour Members want to level people down to the levels that they would have encouraged under collective bargaining. There has been opposition to the judge mentioning douceurs and so on. We are talking about pay increases.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): The hon. Gentleman has talked about the industries that we have got rid of and about progressive trade union legislation that has been enacted during the 14 years of office of this Government. Will he ponder over what we have at the end of it? First, we have at least 3 million unemployed—and that is with rigged statistics. In addition, we have a £50 billion budget deficit. Is that what he calls progress?

Mr. Thurnham: I have not referred to any industries that we have got rid of. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that unemployment would be a great deal higher now than it is if industry were conducted as the Labour party would wish it. It is only by running our industry as competitively as we can that we can compete in world markets. Flexibility is the keynote to it. The importance of the individual must be paramount. That is built into the legislation and into this excellent Bill.

The Labour party has a record of opposing every piece of legislation we introduce to improve industrial relations, and no doubt it will oppose this measure. I call on my hon. Friends fully to support the amendment. I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham is not here. I hope that he will change his mind and will support the amendment.

Mr. Miller: The Secretary of State said that he intended to put the record straight. No one outside listening to his long diatribe would agree that the record is at all straight. The record is being established by a biased and bigoted Government who are intent on one thing. It is obvious that the Government deviously introduced the clause in order to mount a direct attack on the trade union movement.

I have already spoken privately to the Secretary of State for being most unneighbourly. I was going to congratulate him on his elevation to his new position, but he would not give way to me during his speech, so I shall save my personal criticism of him for outside the House.

We must ask ourselves: will the clause stand up to examination, and what exactly does it mean? My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Ms Corston) referred to the International Labour Organisation convention, which is particularly important. Several other international treaties to which we are party have been mentioned and in no case can the Government say that their argument stands up. The ILO convention makes it clear that the clause will not stand up. The precise wording of article 1 is:

> "Workers shall enjoy adequate protection against acts of anti-union discrimination in respect of their employment. Such protection shall apply more particularly in respect of acts calculated to:
> (a) Make the employment of a worker subject to the condition that he shall not join a union or shall relinquish trade union membership;
> (b) Cause the dismissal of or otherwise prejudice a worker by reason of union membership or because of participation in union activities outside working hours or, with the consent of the employer, within working hours."

To my mind, that article says it all. When the Minister replies, will he tell us what legal authorities the Government sought in drafting the clause? What comments were made about article 1? It is obvious that the Government cannot have taken seriously the commitments that we have entered into in convention No. 98 of the ILO.

In the other place, Viscount Ullswater led for the Government and produced what in contradiction to his name—Ullswater is reckoned to be deep—was a shallow, disgraceful speech. That lead has been followed in this place today.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Still waters.

Mr. Miller: Still waters, as the hon. and learned Gentleman says.

On several occasions, the noble Lord said that he was referring to what was best for a company. What is a company? What sort of company exists without employees? The failure to consider the interests of the company at the same time as the interests of the employees is a failing by any employer. That is exemplified in references made later, in column 24 of the *Official Report* of the other place of 24 May, to the way in which industrial tribunals will consider these matters. I shall deal with that in detail in a moment.

The clause is bound to cause a great deal of confusion. Given the resources available to the Government, one must conclude that the confusing speeches by the noble Lord and the Secretary of State were deliberately so, to confuse the public about the intention of the clause.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) referred eloquently to some of the other legal requirements that the Government appear to have carefully ignored. It is also important to consider the practical effects of the new clause for industrial tribunals. In another place, Viscount Ullswater said:

"However, the tribunal must always have regard to the reasonableness of the action taken. If the action is 'such as no reasonable employer would take' in the circumstances, then the tribunal will still be able to decide that the action amounts to action short of dismissal in the terms of Section 146 . . . it will not prevent employers from making and implementing legitimate decisions about how they wish to negotiate with their employees."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 24 May 1993; Vol. 546, c. 24.]

That argument is fundamentally wrong, on two counts. First, the employer is given unilateral rights under the clause to determine the content of a contract. The rights of the majority in a workplace are totally ignored should they decide that collective bargaining is the best means of negotiating. Secondly, the operation of the clause will place industrial tribunals in an impossible position. The Secretary of State has already listed the various considerations that those tribunals would have to consider. They will make their work impossible.

The clause is another lawyers' charter. The Government should tell the House how much the clause will cost the public purse, given that it will increase the work load of the tribunal system, which is already creaking at the knees. Have they estimated the costs to employers and employees and their trade unions of fighting such cases? The clause will significantly alter the costs that were set out when the Bill was first presented to us. When the Minister of State replies, he should tell us about the likely costs.

The Secretary of State, in his past life, attended quite a few industrial tribunals. I wonder how recently he was engaged in such work. In our area, the north-west, the industrial tribunal system cannot cope with its current case load. It is faced with an enormous backlog; cases that I filed in my past occupation have still to be heard. That delay is due to the confusing nature of legislation.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery noted that reference can be made in higher courts to what is recorded in *Hansard*. The new clause will pose a complicated dilemma for any court that is called upon to make head or tail of what the Government have said. On the one hand, they have said that they have no intention of creating a union-bashing charter, but on the other it is obvious from the examples cited in the other place to justify the introduction of the clause that that is the purpose behind it. The courts will have an impossible task.

The Secretary of State sought to clarify the position, but he failed to do so. I do not wish to detain the House because I know that a number of my hon. Friends want to speak. The key to my speech is the ILO convention. It is worth repeating that it states that protection should be offered against acts designed to

"cause the dismissal of or otherwise prejudice a worker by reason of union membership"—

"designed to prejudice a worker". No other interpretation can be made, given that the Government justified its introduction on the ground that this will be the effect of the clause. Against that background, I urge all hon. Members to act in the interests of the rights of individuals who decide, collectively, to have their terms and conditions negotiated by a trade union. Their rights should not be prejudiced by such a shabby and disgraceful clause.

7.15 pm

Mr. Riddick: I had hoped to use this opportunity to welcome my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to his new position. It gives me just as much pleasure, however, to welcome my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State to her position in the Department of Employment. I know that her style is robust. I hope that the Secretary of State will follow the robust tradition of recent Secretaries of State. I hope that he will follow in the tradition of my hon. Friend the Minister of State.

My right hon. Friend's finest moment came during the election campaign in 1987, when he addressed the massed ranks of my constituents-to-be on a rainy day in Netherton, in the Colne valley. Six people turned up to listen to him, and, indeed, to me. For some reason, however, my right hon. Friend went away saying, "We're going to win this seat." Sure enough, we did, for the first time in 102 years. I certainly respect his political judgment.

This has been an interesting debate. I was amused to note that the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), now seems to be in favour of multinationals. I am delighted that they are now in good odour in Labour circles. There was a time when they were figures of socialist hatred, so I am pleased that the Labour party is now displaying some common sense. I noticed, however, that the hon. Gentleman did not respond to my intervention about one member, one vote——

Mr. Boyce: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is the hon. Gentleman speaking to the amendment, as he should be, or replying to the debate?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I understand him to be speaking to the amendment. I am, of course, always anxious to observe high standards, but if I were to follow the advice of the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Boyce) I fear that many hon. Members would be quickly shut up.

Mr. Riddick: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I shall speak to the amendment, but I was sorry that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras did not feel able to respond, if only briefly, to my point about one member, one vote. The reality is that the trade unions are kicking the leader of the Labour party in the teeth over this issue. It appears that he will suffer a serious reverse at the hands of the trade unions. At the end of the day, those unions are vital to the Labour party.

The debate is another example of, when the Trades Union Congress says jump, the Labour party jumps. It is another example of the RMT, the union that sponsors the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, saying, "Yap", and the hon. Gentleman yaps.

Mr. Miller: I was interested to hear the hon. Gentleman refer to the Trades Union Congress telling Opposition Members to jump. That would have been totally impractical, given the time scale in which the Government introduced the clause. The Opposition representatives in the other place had to think on their feet and move quickly. There was no way that consultations could have taken place with the TUC before the Opposition tabled their amendment in the other place.

Mr. Riddick: I know that some TUC members are a bit slow, but they are not so slow as to use the days and weeks—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Hon. Members must not pass between the hon. Member who is on his or her feet.

Mr. Heald: I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker. I thought that I had ducked, but I obviously did not.

Mr. Riddick: I have not taken my eyes off you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and thought that I had you in view all the time. We have all heard what you have said.

The amendment does nothing more than restate employment law as it was originally intended in the 1970s. The amendment resolves the problems created by the recent Court of Appeal judgments, and reinstates in law the status quo that has existed for about 20 years—that the law was intended to protect individual employees against specific acts of discrimination, but not to interfere with collective bargaining. That is the amendment's intention.

Employers cannot discriminate against employees for belonging to a trade union. That right exists in addition to the fact that employers are allowed to alter the collective bargaining arrangements. Both Labour and Conservative Governments have supported the right of employers to alter their collective bargaining arrangements. Governments of both parties have recognised that employers can derecognise a trade union for negotiating purposes and introduce personal contracts—there is nothing new in that. There has been a consensus between the parties that employers should have that freedom of action.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras gave a catalogue of examples of individuals being forced to move to personal contracts. However, companies have been able to do that for years. The amendment does not create anything new in that respect; it simply reinstates the law to the position that everyone thought prevailed before the recent court cases.

Mr. Clapham: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, if an employer can pay an inducement to an employee to give up his or her trade union, and so establish differentials in payments, the disadvantaged member is having action taken against him or her short of dismissal? That has created a different legal position.

Mr. Riddick: The legislation will not create the position described by the hon. Gentleman. We are allowing employers to enter into contracts with employees, but it would be illegal for those employers to sack employees because they continued to remain in a trade union—that right still exists and is enshrined in law. The Conservative Government strengthened that right.

I have some experience of the subject. When I worked in industry I worked for two multinational companies—first, Procter and Gamble and then Coca-Cola. They were good employers and I never felt the need to join a trade union. In both cases, I had a contract with my employer and was perfectly happy with it. I was aware that employees doing similar jobs were being paid different rates. That was for all sorts of reasons, not least because people were at different stages of their careers. I saw nothing wrong in that.

Mr. Thurnham: My hon. Friend speaks from his experience of industry. Does he agree that, if Opposition Members had more experience of industry, they would realise the sense of what he is saying? Earlier, I spoke with experience of starting a business in engineering and having interests in the construction industry. It is obvious that, in any industry today, there must be complete freedom of individual negotiation in order to obtain the highest productivity and compete on a world basis.

Mr. Riddick: It is regrettable that the Opposition have so little industrial experience. If my memory serves me right, the Opposition's three main economic teams—Treasury, Trade and Industry and Employment—contain practically no industrial experience. To be fair, I think that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras once worked for the Central Electricity Generating Board, but there is otherwise little experience on the Labour Benches, which I regret—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) points to his hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith), who I thought had been a brain surgeon. That is an extremely useful occupation, but can hardly be classified as working in industry.

Ms Eagle *rose*——

Mr. Riddick: Perhaps the hon. Lady worked in industry, but she is not on the Front Bench.

Ms Eagle: Does the hon. Gentleman concede that those of us who have worked in trade unions know precisely how employers are likely to behave and, in some cases, exploit their work forces? Therefore, we understand the need for good, strong and free trade unions to achieve equality and fairness in society.

Mr. Riddick: It is regrettable that the hon. Lady should talk about companies exploiting their work forces. That is what we hear all the time from the Opposition. They seem to suggest that the majority of companies in this country are behaving in that way—they are not. Most companies in this country are good employers. The comment comes ill from a Member representing a party which has opposed every piece of employment legislation. As long as the Labour party is in the pockets of trade unions and Labour Members oppose all our trade union employment legislation, we shall not be able to take their comments seriously.

I am not saying that people should not belong to trade unions. There are cases when it is clearly appropriate to do so—for example, when an employee has a bad employer. My wife used to work for a council, and I told her that she should be in a trade union. She was a member of, I think, the National Association of Local Government Officers. Therefore, I am not against trade unions.

Mr. Boyce: Does not the hon. Gentleman understand that it will be the employer's right to recognise or not recognise trade unions? There is nothing in the provision to protect employees from bad employers. I cannot find such a protection within the legislation. Can the hon. Gentleman tell us where it is?

Mr. Riddick: The hon. Member for Bristol, East (Ms. Corston) described the position at Arrowsmith in her constituency. It sounded as though it was a poor employer and was behaving badly, but what she described was not new—companies have for many years been able to sack employees who have gone on strike. There is nothing new in that. The amendment is mild in effect, and I do not believe that it will have the drastic consequences that Opposition Members are trying to suggest.

We should consider the issues in the wider context of the massive improvements in industrial relations that have occurred during the past 14 years—*[Laughter.]* The hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Boyce) laughs, thereby showing how out of touch with reality Opposition Members are. The position in industry has been completely transformed in the past 14 or 15 years. I well remember the days in 1978-79, when the dead went unburied and strikes were the norm. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, strikes were the order of the day.

In the year to last August, 500,000 working days were lost through stoppages. Under Labour, in one month alone 3 million days were lost. There are fewer strikes now than at any time since 1891, and that is to be applauded.

Mr. Boyce: I thank the hon. Gentleman for allowing me to intervene for a second time. How does he reconcile his disapproval of what happened in 1979 during the so-called winter of discontent with the undying support of Lady Thatcher—whom the hon. Gentleman's lot stabbed in the back—for Solidarity in Poland?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Before the hon. Gentleman replies to that intervention, I remind the House that we are not engaged in debating the history of industrial relations or their entire scope. There is an amendment to be considered, and I suggest that hon. Members address it.

7.30 pm

Mr. Riddick: Thank you Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Conservative party supports trade unions. We supported the Solidarity movement in Poland which helped to bring freedom to that country. It was a sorry commentary on the condition of trade unions in this country that we had to look to trade unions in Poland for good examples. During the hon. Gentleman's intervention, I was given some intelligence to the effect that he used to be on Sheffield city council. If ever there was a bunch of unreconstructed socialists, it must have been those councillors.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should be addressing me, and I remind him that I must be convinced that what he says is relevant.

Mr. Riddick: My comment was merely an aside, Madam Deputy Speaker. I did not wish to upset you in any way, and I apologise if I did.

It is important to examine Labour's motives for opposing the amendment. The Opposition record is not good. The amendment is about the rights of individuals and the role of trade unions in society and organisations. Labour has supported strikes and the closed shop through thick and thin, and there have been recent examples of that. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras recently described the fire brigades' decision to support strike action as entirely justified. The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) has said that she supports the teachers' case, and the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) supported striking railwaymen. That shows where Labour's loyalties lie. We shall not take any lectures from the Opposition.

Labour is in the pocket of the trade unions. More than half of all Labour Members are sponsored by trade unions, including all 20 members of the shadow Cabinet. Trade unions provide most of the Labour party's money.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has not convinced me that what he is saying is relevant to the amendment.

Mr. Riddick: My notes tell me that I was about to speak about one member, one vote, but in the light of what you have said, Madam Deputy Speaker, I had better not.

I am delighted to support the amendment, because it protects the right of employers to change their collective bargaining arrangements. It also protects the rights of individuals to belong to trade unions and will sustain the increased flexibility in the labour market that Government reforms have brought about. Unemployment is falling at a much earlier stage in the economic cycle, and I am sure that that is due to the greater flexibility of the labour market.

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): I intend to confine my remarks to the substance of the amendment, unlike the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick).

I have listened to most of the speeches. It could be said that the Government have at least three arguments, to use the term loosely, in support of the amendment. The first of them is that the amendment is merely declaratory and that it merely brings the law into line with the position as it is supposed to be. That argument is completely bogus. It is transparent to anyone who knows the law in this area that

[Mr. John Hutton]

the recent decision in the Wilson case was not unpredictable and did not change our understanding of the law.

Where were the Government's legal advisers in 1987 when the Court of Appeal decided the case of National Coal Board *v.* Ridgeway? That clearly flagged the eventual decision of the Court of Appeal in the Wilson case. Where were those advisers in 1990 when the employment appeal tribunal ruled in the Armitage case? There is nothing revolutionary about the recent Court of Appeal decision in the Wilson case. The issues before the court were not substantially different from those in the Ridgeway case. Both cases involved an attempt by employers to change their collective bargaining machinery. However, the changes penalised trade union members who did not wish to support them.

It is completely bogus for the Government to portray the amendment as simply declaratory. They might tell that to people outside, but to their Back Benchers they say, "Come along lads, this is another opportunity to put the boot in the trade unions and we expect your support in the Lobby." The Government are trying to have the best of both worlds.

The hon. Member for Colne Valley attempted to address the idea that the amendment must be supported because it will promote flexibility in the work force. That is also completely bogus. The Opposition do not oppose flexibility. We want industrial relations law that will provide legitimate protection for the rights of individual employees whether or not they are trade union members. The hon. Member for Colne Valley did not address that. There is no reason why any work force or company cannot be flexible and also enjoy legitimate employment protection. The amendment seeks to remove that perfectly legitimate protection from many workers, irrespective of whether they are in a trade union.

Conservative Members have not addressed the fact that the amendment legitimises and to some extent will encourage and reward the employer who tells his workers, "I have decided to change my collective bargaining machinery. You will either accept the 'benefit' or you will not receive any improvements or amendments to the terms and conditions of your employment."

The hon. Member for Colne Valley said that he used to be employed by Pepsi-Cola.

Mr. Riddick: Coca-Cola.

Mr. Hutton: I have never known the difference between Pepsi-Cola and Coca-Cola. He also said that he worked for Procter and Gamble and that he decided not to join a trade union. I am willing to bet that he took the benefit of the improvement in terms and conditions that the trade unions negotiated on his behalf. How would he have felt if he had not been given the benefits that trade unions acting on his behalf had negotiated? That is the issue under debate. I am confident that the hon. Gentleman would have been horrified if he had been told by his employer, "We have negotiated improvements in terms and conditions, but, because you are not a member of the relevant trade union, you will not benefit." I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman if he wishes to respond.

Mr. Riddick: The hon. Gentleman is missing the point. We are not suggesting that that will happen. The hon. Gentleman argues in favour of the closed shop which says that no employee should enjoy the benefits that have been negotiated with an employer unless he or she is a member of the trade union. Does the hon. Gentleman think that we should have closed shops again?

Mr. Hutton: I gave way as a courtesy to the hon. Gentleman, but, with hindsight, I have done him no favours. The hon. Gentleman has failed to grasp the point of my argument.

Amendment No. 8 will have precisely the effect that I have described. An employer will be able to say to particular groups of workers, "You are not part of the collective bargaining procedure that I have established; therefore, you will not enjoy any of the benefits of the resulting negotiations." If the hon. Gentleman has any doubt about that, he should read the transcripts of the Ridgeway case and the Wilson case that have recently been decided in the Appeal Court. That is precisely what happened to Mr. Wilson, and the Appeal Court said that it was unlawful.

Have I missed something, or are the Government trying to reverse the impact of the Wilson case? The scenario that the hon. Gentleman said was unlikely is precisely what underlines the amendments.

The Government's third argument was that collective bargaining matters should be divorced from individual employment rights. That sounds fine, but it is false rhetoric. Whenever we talk about collective bargaining, we are inevitably talking about the individual terms on which workers are employed. That is the point and the substance of collective bargaining. When collective bargaining produces an agreement, it results in changes to the individual employment contracts of the workers concerned.

It is bogus to say that amendment No. 8 is somehow necessary because we need to separate collective bargaining and individual employment rights. We cannot do that. Anyone who knows anything about industrial relations—and that rules out the hon. Member for Colne Valley—could not possibly make that argument.

What can, or should, we make of amendment No. 8? It is my view and, I am sure, that of my right hon. Friends that it is a dismal amendment which will encourage discrimination and reward efforts to break up established collective bargaining procedures. Only a perverse Government pursuing an absurd vendetta against trade union members, who everywhere else in Europe are regarded as the social partners, could have possibly tabled such an amendment and come to the House and argued in its favour.

We should remind ourselves about the claims made for the Bill when it was presented to the House for Second Reading on 17 November 1992. I quote from the speech of the then Secretary of State for Employment:

> "The Bill has two main objectives: first to strengthen and extend the rights of the individual—both individual employees and individual trade union members".

The second objective is irrelevant to our proceedings today. The right hon. Lady continued:

> "I put it to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras what is unreasonable about allowing trade union members freedom to choose which union they join?".—[*Official Report*, 17 November 1992; Vol. 214, c. 168-80.]

It is clear that the amendment underlines the Government's case on both those counts. It is not an

improvement in the rights of individual employees, and it clearly strikes directly at the heart of the basic principle which is the substance of our argument.

Amendment No. 8 undermines workers' rights to join a particular union of their choice. The results of the Wilson case make it obvious that the Government intend to reverse that and take away from individual workers the right to join the union of their choice.

It may be helpful to the House if we remind ourselves of the Tory election manifesto. I understand there is a debate in the Conservative party about what constitutes a promise. There is an election manifesto and then there is everything that Ministers say afterwards. Apparently, only the manifesto constitutes a promise.

Let us see what the Conservative election manifesto says about this issue. It says clearly:

"We will take measures to give individuals greater freedom in choosing a 'union".

That looks lovely in principle, but amendment No. 8 runs contrary to that manifesto promise. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Colne Valley has had his opportunity to make his argument and I am afraid that he did not make a very good fist of it. He failed to convince me and, I suspect, anyone else who had the benefit of listening to him. There is no doubt whatsoever that amendment No. 8 will strike at the heart of the freedom of individuals to choose which particular union they join.

Mr. Riddick: How?

Mr. Hutton: It is interesting that the hon. Gentleman says, "How?" It is clear that he has not read the Court of Appeal decision in the Wilson case. I have explained to the hon. Gentleman precisely how that will arise. Those in the Wilson case, for example, who choose not to co-operate with a changed collective bargaining procedure and decide to remain in the union of their choice do not get the benefits of any improvements in their terms and conditions of employment. If the hon. Gentleman does not understand that simple point he has problems.

7.45 pm

Amendment No. 8 is a partisan and puerile amendment. It will prove to be the source of injustice in the workplace which will scar our industrial relations for many years to come. The Government have said that it is a technical change, but they will let their supporters know that it is more serious.

I believe that the amendment has been drafted by the pop-eyed fanatics with a bee in their bonnet who occasionally masquerade as Ministers in the Department of Employment. They have no sense of justice, fairness or fair play. It is a purely ideological measure which will strike directly at the conduct of good industrial relations and the individual's right to choose which union to join, which supposedly has underlined the Government's industrial relations programme for many years.

I now return briefly to my main arguments. The amendment does not clarify the law. The law did not need clarifying as it was quite clear after the Wilson and Ridgeway cases. The amendment changes the law and will permit employers openly to discriminate against trade union members. The employer will need to show an industrial tribunal simply that there is evidence that the employer's purpose was to further a change in his relationship with all or any class of his employees.

We also need to remind ourselves that employers are legally free to establish whatever bargaining arrangements they choose and to recognise or derecognise unions as they think fit. Why should they also have the power actively to penalise employees who want to be members of a particular trade union? That is the essence of the amendment.

The Wilson and Ridgeway cases both involved inter-union rivalry and attempts by employers to resolve bargaining rights that resulted from that. In both cases, the Court of Appeal rightly concluded that workers were being discriminated against financially in the employers' efforts to settle the outstanding disputes about which union should be recognised. That is the point that the hon. Member for Colne Valley failed to address.

There is quite strong evidence that the amendment does not propose to change the law relating to collective bargaining, so the freedom of an employer to change or alter his collective bargaining procedures has been left intact. Why should the employer have the additional power actively and financially to penalise employees who decide that they do not want to participate in that alteration in the collective bargaining procedure? That claim has nothing to do with flexibility; it is all about imposing a direct financial penalty on employees who fail to co-operate.

Mr. Roy Hughes: How does my hon. Friend reconcile his point of view with the tendency today for one-union factories? If an individual is allowed to join whichever trade union he wishes, we will return to the old scenario of a multiplicity of trade unions with all the chaos that that can cause.

Mr. Hutton: My hon. Friend has not followed the precise point I was making. It is legally the case that employees have the right under statute to join any trade union they wish. That right still exists, although a single union agreement may apply in a particular workplace. Why should individual workers be penalised financially if they choose not to be members of a particular trade union with which the employer wishes to negotiate? It is a basic right in a workplace that employees should be entitled to join whatever union they wish, and I would not want my remarks to be construed as contrary to that point.

If there was any truth in the claim that the amendment was merely declaratory, why did not the Government act earlier? Why did not they act after the Ridgeway decision was announced in 1987, six years ago? Since then, there have been at least two occasions when the Government could have changed the law.

The second point to which I should refer briefly concerns the United Kingdom's international legal obligations. Some of my hon. Friends have already referred to the outstanding international law aspects of the amendment, but we need to remind ourselves that at least two international legal instruments have a bearing on our discussions today. One is article 11 of the European convention on human rights, which is a transparent declaration of rights with regard to the freedom of association which I am sure all hon. Members will support.

Of more immediate relevance is article 1 of the International Labour Organisation convention No. 98 of 1949. It is clear from that convention that the United Kingdom Government is under a legal obligation, enforceable in international law, to respect the right of

[Mr. Hutton]

freedom of association and not to take measures that could be construed as running directly counter to that international obligation.

What is the value and benefit of an international right if, in order to exercise it, an individual employee experiences some sanction or penalty? That is not a right at all. An employee does not have a right to do something if an employer is allowed actively to penalise or impose some sanction on him.

It is clear to me, and I suspect that it must be clear to the Government's legal advisers, that there is at least an argument that the Government have acted in a way that is inconsistent with their treaty obligation under convention No. 98. The only decent thing for the Government to do is either to acknowledge that there has been some mistake or to deratify or de-sign the United Kingdom from that International Labour Organisation convention. I bet that before too long that is precisely what the Government will do. If they do that, they will be the only Government since 1949 to deratify that convention—what an epitaph on the Government's tombstone.

Thirdly, it is worth pointing out that the amendment is badly drafted. It simply says that there must be evidence that the employer's purpose was within paragraph (a). There is no hint in the amendment about what kind of evidence there should be, its strength or quality, or anything at all about the merits of the employer's argument. There must simply be evidence that the employer's purpose was that specified in paragraph (a).

Conservative Members who wish to paint a rosy picture of the amendment should be clear that if an employer is presenting an argument under paragraph (a), it is only because there is also evidence that the employer is discriminating against an employee because of his or her membership of a particular union. That is the context in which any argument about the employer's purpose has to be deployed before an industrial tribunal. It has to be the case that in the absence of that argument the employer's case would fail; it would be regarded as illegal. Therefore, we must be clear that the amendment is set in the context of clear evidence of discrimination against an employee on the ground of his trade union membership.

The House needs to look carefully at the amendment. It should be conscious of our obligations under international law and of our obligations to act fairly, with common sense and with a sense of fair play with regard to the employment rights of individual workers. If the House reaches a decision from those two perspectives, it can only reject the amendment.

Mr. Heald: I am grateful to have the opportunity to make a short contribution. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who is absent, and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, who is present, on their recent appointments and I wish them well during the coming years.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The hon. Gentleman speaks for himself.

Mr. Heald: I am told that I speak for myself, but I think that I speak for the Conservative party and Conservative Members in expressing those sentiments.

The amendment is necessary for two reasons: first, to clarify the law and, secondly, to enable employers to have bargaining arrangements with employees which suit the needs of the workplace.

It has been said that the legal position was clear before the decisions in the Court of Appeal. Nothing could be further from the truth. I have practised in this area of the law for many years. Companies have sought advice from me on these issues. There were contentions on both sides. It is right, as was said earlier by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), that somebody of the stamp of John Hendy QC is a force to be reckoned with. He had a point of view which he expressed in the Court of Appeal and he succeeded. But it is equally true that Patrick Elias QC, an eminent silk in this area, the editor of "Harvey on Industrial Relations Law", the established text, took a completely different viewpoint, argued it and lost. It is wrong to say that in those circumstances, with eminent lawyers putting forward arguable viewpoints on both sides, the law is as clear as day. That is hindsight writ large.

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): Would the hon. Gentleman therefore argue that in every case ever heard in the Court of Appeal where barristers are found to argue for both sides the law must be in doubt?

Mr. Heald: That is not what I am saying and I think that the hon. Gentleman realises that.

The point in this case, which I shall amplify in a moment, is that the industrial tribunal, with an experienced tribunal chairman and experienced lay members who listen to detailed argument from experienced lawyers, came to one conclusion. The matter then went to the employment appeal tribunal, which has a High Court judge who deals with such cases every day of the week, flanked by members of great eminence, including senior trade union leaders whom we all remember from years back, eminent employers and so on. They heard the arguments and decided the case in a completely different way.

Both the industrial tribunal and the employment appeal tribunal said in this case that the decisions were difficult to make. The matter then went to the Court of Appeal which made a decision which is the current state of the law. There may be a further appeal to the other place, and who knows what the result of that would be in this case? But it is worth saying that the House has the opportunity to clarify the law tonight, and why should that not be done?

Mr. Clapham: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the Ridgeway *v.* British Coal case in 1987, when John Hendy represented the union, clarified the law and since 1987 the law has been clear? Does he further agree that that clarity was added to by the two cases that were heard in the Court of Appeal?

Mr. Heald: If the hon. Gentleman allows me to develop my argument, I shall deal with that point.

The point about collective agreements is that they are not legally enforceable. When in the 1970s the Government offered to make them legally enforceable the offer was flatly rejected on both sides of industry. A collective agreement which sets out a bargaining arrangement can be part of the individual's contract of employment only if it is incorporated in it, and usually it is not.

There has been a series of cases, of which Alexander *v.* STC is probably the most recent, where it was held that provisions of collective agreements that deal with bargaining machinery and such issues are not part of the individual's contract of employment. That thrust of the law has been there for 20 or 30 years. It is part of the background to what we are discussing tonight and cannot be ignored.

It was thought of section 23 of the 1978 Act that the words

"action . . . taken against him as an individual"

meant that the action had to be concentrated on the individual's position rather than being an action that could be described as collective. It was thought that derecognising the union, taking away collective bargaining arrangements, was an action more properly directed at the union rather than the individual. Therefore, in a leading text—"Harvey on Industrial Relations Law" in fact—headed:

"Taken against him as an individual"

it says:

"This requirement raises a fundamental question as to the nature of the action taken by the employer—was it collective (ie against the union itself) or individual? Action against the union that merely affects the individual as a member would not be within this section."

Hon. Members have criticised those of us who have advised companies—and individuals, I hasten to add—on the provision over the past few years. We have been in some doubt about what the law actually is.

The hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham) mentioned the 1987 National Coal Board case, in which the Union of Democratic Mineworkers received a higher pay award than the National Union of Mineworkers. I am not sure that NUM members received any increase in money at all, but, if they did, it was much less than the amount received by UDM members. It was argued then that to pay a worker less because he was a member of a particular trade union was unlawful, under section 23 of the 1978 Act. Those who advanced that argument, however, did not go on to consider circumstances in which a union had been derecognised and the employer wanted to introduce individual contracts providing for such matters as profit-related pay and profit sharing.

8 pm

It was thought at that time that if an employer was introducing a contract that was more beneficial than the existing contract in terms of pay and conditions, no one could argue that employees who did not accept that contract were being penalised under section 23. It was said by lawyers that they were simply not receiving an advantage received by others. No doubt that is a very legalistic approach. Decisions made in the Court of Appeal have taken the interpretation of the law a stage further; before April this year, no cases existed that decided these issues.

I have mentioned the case involving the NUM and the UDM. The Armitage case—which has also been mentioned—clearly demonstrated that a union member had been punished for involving a union representative in a dispute with his employer; the references to the judgments involved are also very clear. What was not decided, however, was what happened when one group of employees received a payment and another group was not given a specific punishment. The effect of those judgments has been quite different from what was expected by many in the legal profession.

I am not saying that the Court of Appeal was wrong to make the decisions that it made in interpreting the law; any lawyer would accept that it has made its ruling. The House of Lords may decide the question on some future occasion, but why should we wait, when we have the opportunity to clarify the law and reach a conclusion tonight about its correct interpretation? It is unlikely, but perhaps the Opposition will triumph, leaving us with the judgment of the Court of Appeal and awaiting that of the House of Lords. What is more likely is that Conservative Members will back an amendment that clarifies the law, in the interests of both workers and employers.

One of the developments that set the 1980s apart was the change in a number of aspects of the workplace—a change for the better, in my view. Suddenly, unions were prepared to reach single-union deals. I do not think that many people genuinely believe that those deals were not in the interests of the workers. Surely they were preferable to deals made by a group of unions which might not always agree among themselves, and which did not always represent the workers as effectively. I think that they were a tremendous success.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): What about the closed shop?

Mr. Heald: I will not reply to sedentary interventions. No one could say that workers in, for instance, the Honda factory in Swindon, where individual contracts operate, do not enjoy excellent terms and conditions.

Mr. Etherington: Would the hon. Gentleman care to comment on the following circumstances? Individual employees have been balloted at their workplace, and have decided on a particular trade union, only to find later that their employer has imposed another union on them against their will. Is that the hon. Gentleman's understanding of democracy?

Mr. Heald: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising the point. One of the problems in this country is the chaotic nature of the union movement. I hesitate to criticise it in the presence of so many of its members, but a large number of unions are competing with each other for membership. One of the great advantages of the single-union deal was that at least it brought some common sense into the workplace.

Mr. Etherington *rose*——

Mr. Heald: I do not accept the argument that the hon. Gentleman is probably about to advance—that giving trade unionists freedom to choose which union to join conflicts with single-union deals. The point about such deals is that it is known which union is recognised; it does the dealing, and the end result is generally in the interests of the workers.

Mr. Etherington: How does the hon. Gentleman square his opinion with the fact that, when a single-union deal was struck in the coal industry, a Conservative Government sought to involve another union of their creation, which they sustained and nourished—the scab union that has the nerve to call itself a union, although I do not class it as one? The Government say that single-union deals must be good: that they have created

[Mr. Etherington]

harmony from chaos. Yet they were responsible for effectively trying to destroy a single-union agreement in the mining industry, in much the same way as they are now destroying the industry itself.

Mr. Heald: I could hide behind the argument that British Coal—although it has not yet been privatised—is an independent body, a corporation which makes its own decisions; but I do not think I need do that. Some Conservative Members—I am certainly one—admire the way in which UDM members stood up for common sense and decency during that long strike. I know that the hon. Gentleman will not agree, but I am glad that they were given the opportunity to play a role in the coal industry. I believe that, even now, they are presenting some of the more imaginative proposals for the industry's future—far more imaginative than those of the NUM, whose policies seem to belong to the dark ages. I do not accept that the old, NUM-style union leaders are making the most genuine, cutting-edge contributions.

The old-fashioned, dinosaur trade union leaders often say that all the Acts passed during the 1980s should be repealed; but do Opposition Members really want to return to the days of flying pickets, secondary action and all the nonsense of the show of hands at the factory gate? We have got rid of all that, and I believe that, in general, the Labour party agrees with what we were doing two or three years ago, at any rate. It is a pity that there cannot be more consensus about where we are going.

Companies want single-union deals and individual contracting because they want to be able to compete. They are just like you and me. It is a breath of fresh air to visit some of the modern workplaces and see what is being done there; indeed, it shows us the future. I believe that hon. Members on both sides of the House should go and look at those projects, and see the future. I believe that they should support initiatives that bring such features of British industry closer to being the norm.

We face threats from the Pacific rim——

Ms Eagle: We are hearing about the Pacific rim again. Does the hon. Gentleman suggest that we must compete with the lowest of the low, on what are almost slave wages, to have an industry in the future? Or does he think that we should create a floor of provision so that we can compete on quality rather than slave wages?

Mr. Heald: I am about to visit Taiwan and Japan to see for myself. I do not claim to have personal knowledge of it. What I have read and what I have heard as a member of the Employment Select Committee from the Japanese, Taiwanese and others who have come to visit us to give evidence is that they have rising wage rates. They have high-tech industries and modern, individual contracting arrangements such as those I have described. They are leading the way to the future.

It may be that some countries in the Pacific rim still have low wages, but not all of them have. We are competing against countries with high levels of skill and the wide range of instruments that are needed in order to be a successful modern economy. The time has come for a shake-up on the Labour Benches. The question is not whether we should have derecognition or recognition of trade unions for bargaining, but whether we recognise what the future requires so that we can move forward and put Britain back to where it should be as one of the top manufacturing countries in the world. We can do that if we act together in the interests of the nation.

Ms Eagle: Before making any comments on the amendment, I remind the House that when the Bill was in Committee I declared an interest as a member of the Confederation of Health Service Employees. I am also sponsored by that union. That does not mean any personal financial remuneration, but a small amount of money is paid to my constituency party every year. I am COHSE sponsored because I believe in principle that membership of trade unions is a good thing and that having an active trade union movement, unencumbered by vindictive laws, is a sign of freedom in a society and is something that we should all desire.

The background to the Lords amendment is the Government's labour market policy over the past 14 years. There has been much fine and interesting shadow boxing today, mainly between lawyers, about what is at stake. What is at stake is the balance of power in industrial relations. Over the past 14 years the Government have had at their heart the desire to deregulate the labour market. They have tried to do that because it fosters exploitation, lowers wages, allows arbitrary treatment and insecurity at work and provides no knowledge of whether there will be a set contract even within a few months.

Mr. Heald: I listened to what the hon. Lady said about the balance of power in industry. She made it sound very adversarial. Will she accept that in the best and most modern plants there is a team effort and everybody works together? They do not have a confrontational approach. Has she visited factories where that is true?

Ms Eagle: Of course, the best industrial relations is a team effort, where it occurs. Unfortunately, the way in which the Government have changed the law, together with some of their other economic policies, has encouraged and spread bad employment practices.

We have had six punishing and vindictive Acts of Parliament which have institutionalised discrimination against trade unions. That is unprecedented in western democracies, and it is a record of which I believe any totalitarian regime would be proud. The economic policy pursued by the Government has been so disastrous that it has led to mass unemployment on a scale not experienced since the 1930s. People who say that individual employees have a choice and can leave a job must remember how constrained that choice is when they are unlikely to obtain another job because of the bad state of the economy.

The Government's ambition is to turn us into the sweat shop of Europe. They have made their refusal to sign the social chapter and guarantee working people decent pay and conditions into some sort of perverted virtue whereas it is a barbaric disgrace. The Government have abolished many employment protections and failed to create a framework of law which will impose responsibilities on employers to treat their work force decently. It is against that background that the amendment must be judged.

I believe that the weakening and destruction of trade unions has been central to the Government's political aims since 1979. The Lords amendment, which is an opportunistic amendment, and was suddenly perceived as such when the Court of Appeal made its judgment and the Bill happened still to be in the Lords, is a massive

escalation of the assault on trade union rights. It is an assault on not only collective but individual trade union rights.

The Government's methods and motives in this matter have been extremely cynical and beneath contempt. No other democracy would contemplate overturning a court decision so quickly, with no consultation, before the judgment was published in its written form and before all legal action in the cases concerned had been completed. We have a higher court so that it can make final judgments on such matters. The Government are so contemptuous of the rule of law and the courts that they go ahead with their ideological bigotry before the Law Lords have had a chance to sit.

On 30 April the Court of Appeal made its judgment. On 6 May the amendment was announced in the House of Lords. It was published on 20 May—a Thursday—and on the Monday the House of Lords was asked to sit in judgment on the new clause, which had come out of the blue. After 90 minutes of debate, the clause was carried.

8.15 pm

The amendment is a blatant abuse of parliamentary procedures simply because, as was said earlier, the Third Reading had already taken place. Extremely unusual tactics had to be pursued in order to fit the amendment in while the Bill was in the other place. It is immoral because it gives the green light to victimisation in the workplace. It is a serious attack on the freedom of association. It is important to remember how Hannah Arendt, that great writer about totalitarianism, defined what is meant by that term. She explained that one of the conditions that needs to exist in a totalitarian regime was what she called "atomisation". That means the isolation of individuals and the derogation of collective rights. What we have here is a precise example of atomisation.

The amendment is probably illegal. As has been mentioned, it is certainly against many of our international obligations. It is probably against article 118 of the treaty of Rome—I thought that the Government were pro-Europe. It is against the International Labour Organisation convention on freedom of association, and, as has also been pointed out, it is against the European convention on human rights. Did the Government check on any of that in their hurry to push the amendment through in the other place?

During the debate in the other place, Earl Russell asked Viscount Ullswater whether he had taken advice on whether the amendment was contrary to European law. Viscount Ullswater said:

"We do not believe that there is any infringement of any international obligations."

Puzzled by that answer, Earl Russell again asked whether that opinion was based on any legal advice. Viscount Ullswater said:

"I should have to take advice upon that."

Clearly there was confusion.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I am sure that the hon. Lady would not want to misrepresent my hon. and noble Friend Viscount Ullswater. Later in the debate, in answer to a question from the noble Lord Russell, my noble Friend said:

"the Government have not taken legal advice outside Government on the matter. However, the Government are satisfied that there is nothing in the amendment which is in breach of our EC or other international obligations."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 24 May 1993; Vol. 546, c. 42-51.]

If the hon. Lady has read the debate, I am puzzled why she is not making that position clear to the House.

Ms Eagle: The Opposition have slightly less faith in the Government's ability to take their own legal advice and in the quality of that advice when it is taken. Doubtless the time will come when that assertion will be checked in the international courts.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Is that legal advice the same as that which backed up the viscount, as reported on 6 May? Viscount Ullswater said that the House of Lords should welcome the fact that

"the Government intend to clarify an area of law which has been thrown into confusion by the Court of Appeal's decision".—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 6 May 1993; Vol. 545, c. 862.]

It seems that we have returned to the position whereby the law is what the Government want it to be after the fact rather than their saying in advance what they hope it will be and changing the law if the Court of Appeal disagrees with them.

Ms Eagle: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his observation. The one thing that is certain is the fact that the Court of Appeal was sure about what the law should be when it made its unanimous decision on 30 April.

In practice, the amendment will allow bribery and coercion of individuals to sign away their rights in the workplace. Its purpose is to remove the very raison d'être of trade unions and hope that they will wither away as a result. The Court of Appeal agrees and found that the only purpose of paying non-union members a differential was to penalise people for being members of a trade union. The aim of the amendment is indirectly to abolish trade unions. I believe that that is the Government's motivation.

What protection will there be from the abuse of employers' power and from the arbitrary imposition of different terms and conditions of work? What protection is there for the individual in the workplace if the amendment is accepted? The only thing that is worse than the amendment and the intention behind it is the Government's display of Orwellian double-speak in their cynical attempt to justify their outrageous decision to introduce amendment No. 8 in the first place.

First, the Government denied that the amendment meant a change in the law. Indeed, the Secretary of State was at that trick again today. The Government said that the amendment is a clarification, but I believe that that notion has been comprehensively dealt with by my colleagues. Clearly, it is a serious change in the law.

Secondly, the Government have said that a new management right is elucidated to decide exactly how management wants to negotiate with its staff. They talk a great deal about relations between employers and their staff, but the way in which they define those relations is almost like those between master and slave. The employer can do anything that he or she wants as long as it is in the workplace, and the staff have to put up with it or go. That does not lead to a good, active economic regime in a modern civilised economy.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The hon. Lady has been studying the record of debates in another place. Will she respond to

[Mr. Michael Forsyth]

the point made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State about the Labour Government's position in 1975? Lord Jacques said:

"Clause 45"—

as it was—

"deals with individual rights of employees, not collective bargaining issues . . . By giving the individual employee a right to take part in his unions' activities unimpeded, Clause 45 does not require an employer to recognise his union or treat with it in any way."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 23 September 1975; Vol. 364, c. 189.]

The position as enunciated by the Labour Government appears to be that which the hon. Lady is attacking.

Ms Eagle: The Minister of State must not read quotations out of context. The debate on 25 September 1975 was in answer to the Earl of Gowrie who had tabled an amendment to the effect that such protections should apply only where there was recognition of the union, which puts the entire debate in a wholly different perspective. That should be borne in mind.

I am anxious to conclude and allow other hon. Members to speak. In Tory double-speak, denying a pay rise to a trade union member is not victimisation but allowing the employer to achieve an organisational or strategic purpose. The people of this country know precisely what is behind the Government's outrageous behaviour. Unless amendment No. 8 is thrown out and treated with the contempt it deserves, the people of Britain will realise exactly how the law is being used, and they will punish the Government for it.

Mr. Boyce: Anybody listening to our debate would get the impression that the Tories are the workers' friends, but nothing could be further from the truth. There has been much wringing of hands today. One Conservative Member, who I understand has had to leave the Chamber to take a telephone call, said that we want more consensus politics. I wonder where he has lived for the past 14 years. Under Baroness Thatcher, consensus was a word which would not have dared utter its name in the House or elsewhere. Consensus politics went out of the window.

We are encouraged to believe that the amendment will lead to better protection and higher wages. One Conservative Member said that it is not about lower wages but higher wages—talk about the moon being made of blue cheese. If Conservative Members were honest, they would perhaps agree with the Foreign Secretary, who said on Radio FM that Britain would have to compete with the Tamils before we succeed in the market. I have the tape of the broadcast if anybody wants to borrow it—for example, the Minister of State.

The honest Conservative Members spoke about the least possible employee protection. If the Government were being honest, we would be discussing the abolition of trade unions because that is their final intention. Where do we go from here? One of Lady Thatcher's most praised successes was the reform of the trade unions, so why is there a need for the amendment? It is not merely to clarify the law which, in any event, is the role of the courts. We are the lawmakers and the courts interpret what we say, although perhaps not what we intended to say. The amendment is clearly a change in the law and anyone who says otherwise is not being truthful.

I should have declared an interest at the beginning of my speech. I am proud to be a member of and sponsored by the Amalgamated Engineering Union. My union was in the forefront of single union deals. I may have reservations about such deals, but they appear to be successful in many cases. What will happen if an employer can arbitrarily change the union with which he or she is negotiating without consultation? Where does that leave the employee if he decides that he wants to belong to another trade union? I could be cynical and say that I shall join the Association of First Division Civil Servants first thing tomorrow morning. I am sure that I would be welcomed within the ranks of the civil service.

I know that other hon. Members wish to speak, so I shall conclude by returning to something I said earlier. The Bill is another step towards the derecognition and abolition of trade unions by the Government. They would admit that if they were honest. They began by banning trade unions at GCHQ. To pile agony on agony, is not it ironic that a person who injures himself and earns more than £60 a week will be refused legal aid whereas, under this legislation, anyone can challenge a trade union's decision to take industrial action or any decision that he believes will affect him personally? He has only to take the matter up with Jill Rowlands, the Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members, and he will be given almost a blank cheque to pursue the union in the courts. How does that square with the democratic rights of ordinary trade unionists?

Finally, somebody will have to tell us where the case law on equal pay for work of equal value stands now. If paying non-trade unionists more than trade unionists for the same work is not a change in law, somebody had better explain why. Somebody had better get an answer to that question quickly.

8.30 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Whatever protests Conservative Members may make, a vital freedom is under threat from the amendment—the right freely to associate and to join in collective bargaining. The Court of Appeal was absolutely clear, and I see no confusion in its judgments. In both cases, it found that a kind of bribery was being offered, which had only one purpose—to penalise people for being members of trade unions and to deter them from remaining members. The judges spoke with great clarity when they decided that the employers' object was to reduce the power of the unions, and that such anti-union discrimination was unlawful.

I read an article by Hugo Young of *The Guardian* about the court cases, in which he talked about

"a shameful saga, showing up a politically sick society".

I disagree with only one word of that—the word "society". I would replace it with the word "Government".

When moving his amendment in the other place, Lord Ullswater said that the position after the judgment both of the employment appeal tribunal and of the Court of Appeal was unsatisfactory. We must ask, unsatisfactory for whom? Was it unsatisfactory for employers, who have friends in government, who want to break international law and who do not want to conform to international standards? Most of us here think that that is the truth. Of course, the amendment represents a change in the law, and it is extremely cynical to pretend otherwise. It is yet another attack on trade unions, intended to deter people from joining. The Government's objectives are clear, and they cannot hide them with all the clever "lawyerspeak"

that we have heard in the debate. The amendment is designed to ensure that the rights of employers to discriminate against trade unionists are solid. Everybody recognises that. The so-called dispassionate legal gobbledegook uttered by the Secretary of State does not fool anyone on the Opposition side of the House.

I add my voice to those who have objected to the underhand way in which the amendment was sneaked into the House of Lords. It was drafted without consultation and rushed through at the last possible moment. That was a typically sneaky and cynical manoeuvre from a totally unprincipled Government.

Trade unions are an essential part of a democracy. They are the only organisations that stand between ordinary working people and the untrammelled power of business and government. Business interests and employers have massive representation in the House and elsewhere. We all know about the secret funding by wealthy individuals and the company donations that keep the Tory party afloat and influence Tory policies. The amendment is just another example of that influence. Asil Nadir was no exception; the history of the Tory party is riddled with scandal. By contrast, trade unions are open about their support for Labour, and their members are consulted at every level.

Over the past 14 years, there have been many pieces of legislation, every one of which has been aimed at seriously weakening trade unions and the way in which they represent working people in the workplace. The measure before us is the most pernicious of all. It is almost certainly in breach of International Labour Organisation regulations and of European legislation. No reporting and quoting Lord Ullswater will remove that fact, which will emerge again in the future.

The Government argument that the amendment secures the right of employers to negotiate with their staff is clearly nonsense. Of course employers will flock to offer extra money to induce staff to surrender their right to union representation, because that will pay off. It will help to weaken the unions further, and once the unions are completely ineffective in bargaining, the employer will move in and pay any kind of wages and impose any kind of conditions. Inducement not to join a union will leave many employees unprotected and, of course, it will seriously weaken trade unions.

The amendment would make it legal to victimise trade unions. It is a change in the law designed to legalise victimisation, and the Government know it. I agree with many of my hon. Friends that the next step will be to outlaw trade union membership altogether. This is a sad day for democracy, and the measure is certainly a betrayal of justice and of working people in this country.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): In view of what I have heard in the debate, I wish to make a brief contribution.

Lords amendment No. 8 brings the law into line with what I have always assumed it to be, and I used to be a practitioner in company and in employment law. Indeed, during the 1980s I spent much time advising employers on how they could remove themselves and their employees from the shackles of old and dusty collective agreements and local house agreements, and transform the working and legal relationship into one based on individual contracts. We went about doing that in the 1980s in exactly the same way in which the amendment envisages that it can be done. For all the right sound commercial reasons, the relationship between employer and employee was transformed.

As we look round at the industrial and commercial landscape in the 1990s, we find that in many companies the reforms of the 1980s have freed up working relationships, so that rather than having to go through a trade union intermediary and negotiate on every nut and bolt, every working practice, employers and employees now talk to each other. Instead of local and national agreements, many provisions of which were not known to people locally, employers now get round the table with employees and talk about what is required in the firm. That is happening up and down the land, whether Opposition Members recognise it or not.

Over the past 10 to 14 years, employees have benefited from better working relationships with employers than they had in days gone by. I argue strongly that what has happened as a result of Conservative trade union legislation has been to the benefit of many employees. I talk to a lot of people employed in all sorts of companies and businesses, and they appreciate having the freedom to communicate with employees and to have the kind of individual contracts of employment that can reward merit rather than rewards being locked away in collective bonuses and other agreements.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, the amendment simply reflects the law as I have always assumed it to be. Employers have the right to sit down with employees and to change the terms and conditions of employment, without in any sense discriminating against trade union members. We must ask ourselves: does the amendment prevent anyone from joining a trade union? The answer is no, it does not. Does it deal at all with the issue of employers recognising trade unions? No. That is entirely a matter for the employer to decide in consultation with his work force.

We are seeing on the Opposition Benches some of the ritual war dances that we have seen over the years. It saddens me enormously that lessons have not been learnt from the past 14 years. It is especially poignant that, as we debate the issue tonight, I understand that the management of Timex have now decided to close the factory because of the intransigence of trade unions in that locality.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): If the hon. Gentleman had any knowledge of the real situation in Dundee he would know that the factory is closing down because of the intransigence of its management, which from the very beginning has refused to negotiate. Indeed, it manoeuvred the workers outside the factory gates so that it could use Tory employment laws to sack the entire trade union work force and bring in non-union workers. But those macho tactics did not work. What we are presented with today is the sweetener approach, which it is thought will have the desired effect of doing away with trade unions and the collective rights of workers.

Mr. Streeter: Last night, I saw trade union officials leaving a hotel in Scotland, having spoken to management. They were saying that management had said that if the dispute continued, there would be a real prospect of its having to close the factory, that there would be no alternative. The interviewer asked the trade union officials, "Does this mean that you are going to change your

[Mr. Streeter]

position?" and was told, "Oh no, we will fight to the end." What a sad indictment. They have indeed fought to the end—the end of their members' jobs—and I hope that they are proud.

Mr. Heald: Does my hon. Friend agree that the situation is governed not just by the employment laws of the 1980s? The old common law of England——

Mr. McAllion: What about Scotland?

Mr. Heald: The old common law of England, Wales and Scotland has always provided that if workers go on strike, the employer is entitled to dismiss them. Employers have always been able to take such action, just as workers have always been able to strike.

Mr. Streeter: My hon. Friend makes a very valuable point. That has been the law for many generations, and it must continue to be the cornerstone of employment legislation.

I have said all that I want to say. The amendment clarifies the law as being what it has always been intended to be. In the long term, it will benefit management and employees and will facilitate modern industrial relations.

8.45 pm

Mr. Denham: We have heard much about the niceties of the law and the history of the situation. I should like to put on record what happened in one of the test cases.

The case concerning Associated British Ports in Southampton led to the judgment that resulted in this hurried amendment. It is a case that any reasonable person would describe as demonstrating unfair, unreasonable and unjust company conduct, leading to action in the Court of Appeal. The company set out to get rid of the union organisation. It offered the workers personal contracts, which required, in addition to the surrender of union recognition, the introduction of more flexible patterns of work. Three members of the union—Brian Stedman, Eddie Wyeth and Terry Palmer—said that they wanted to have continued union recognition. Those who maintained that position, following union negotiation with the company, were offered a pay increase of 8·9 per cent. Those who signed the personal contracts received an increase of 22 per cent. That is the root of this case.

We have heard much from Conservative Members about management's need for flexibility. The personal contracts to which I have just referred included more flexible patterns of work. The three men who resisted, standing out for union recognition, said that they were absolutely committed to adoption of the same flexible working patterns as the ones included in the personal contracts. In other words, the flexibility being sought by management was on offer. The management's only reason for pursuing the case through the Court of Appeal was that it was determined to break union organisation in the port. The argument that these moves are necessary for the achievement of management flexibility are therefore refuted absolutely.

It is a sad fact that, over the years, the port of Southampton has been a place of industrial confrontation. Unfortunately, the management there has never been able to develop the co-operative and inclusive style of management that we have heard described so glowingly by Conservative Members. Within the past few months a port company—part-owned by ABP, which funds the activities of at least one hon. Member, and P and O, which gives money to the Conservative party—sought to impose new working practices on a unionised part of the port and, at the same time, recruited a secret strike-breaking force to come in and take jobs on the outbreak of the predicted industrial action. But the industrial action did not break out, as the unions agreed to the changes in working practices for which the company had been asking. The company changed the rules again, in a further attempt to provoke industrial action and justify locking people out, as, tragically, has happened in Dundee. The truth is that management gets the type of trade unionism that it deserves. Confrontational management produces robust trade unionism, but trade unions are always blamed for the type of response.

This country faces a clear choice about the way in which it should go in industrial relations. In Britain, there are intelligent, co-operative, far-sighted managers who recognise the importance of developing team work, of providing information to their employees, of involving people in decisions and of producing a modern and effective industrial sector. However, there is also a brutal and stupid class of management which believes in keeping the work force in the dark, in leading only from the top and in ruling by fear and insecurity. The significance of this amendment is that the Government are throwing in their lot with the latter, backward-looking, section of British industrial management. Far from promoting and backing those managers who want to work with the work force and with trade unions, to provide information, to let people in on plans and know about the difficulties and the challenges so that they may be tackled in unity, the Government have come down decisively on the side of those who say that managers should sit in their offices and send out directives and that those who do not like it can lump it.

This amendment will not be exploited by good and far-sighted managers. They do not need it, as they do not run their organisations in such a way as to need it. The amendment will be exploited by the worst British managers for the worst reasons—the worst reasons not just for the workers, but for the country as a whole. Thus it is highly significant. It is a great shame, but not a surprise, that the Government have thrown their lot in with such people and given the wrong message to people in British industry.

Mr. Clapham: I should like, at the outset, to declare an interest. I am a member of the National Union of Mineworkers, and I am proud to be sponsored by my union.

Over the past 14 years the Conservative Government have put on the statute book six major pieces of legislation in this field. Each of them attacks trade union rights. The legislation has made it difficult for trade unions to operate, but it stops short of actually outlawing or penalising union membership. This amendment changes all that. If it is accepted, it will be lawful for an employer to pay a trade unionist more than another worker doing the same job in return either for relinquishing his union membership or for accepting bargaining arrangements with another trade union. That is a major change in the law, and it cannot be right.

Clearly the amendment makes it lawful to offer a bribe. A worker is bribed for the purpose of inducing him to

leave the union that he chose to join. It therefore imposes action short of dismissal on those who stay with the union of their choice. It is clear that such action taken by an employer to induce workers to leave the union of their choice is intended to deter or prevent individuals from joining or remaining in the union of their choice. There is no doubt that the amendment has been introduced because of the recent Court of Appeal judgment in two cases—Associated Newspapers Limited *v.* Wilson and Associated British Ports and others. That judgment was not what the Government wanted. They therefore decided to change the law.

I believe that another motive behind the amendment is to give the employer the right to choose the trade union that he considers his employees should join. That was made plain by Viscount Ullswater in the other place:

"An employer may . . . wish to alter his bargaining arrangements. He may . . . offer incentives to encourage employees to accept a new arrangement where a certain trade union does not negotiate terms on their behalf."—[*Official Report, House of Lords,* 24 May 1993; Vol. 1567, c. 97.]

The emphasis—"a certain trade union"—is important. That means that if, for example, an employer finds that his employees are in a trade union which bargains hard, or which vigorously pursues health and safety issues on the shop floor, or which robustly follows through common law damages claims, he can seek to transfer the bargaining arrangements to a union that he regards as less vigorous. Under the amendment, he could claim reasonableness in the sense that his action related to the commercial viability of his concern—that he was changing the bargaining arrangements merely to reduce his insurance premiums. The amendment thus brings about a major change in the law.

The proposal is a shabby device to set in motion a procedure to impose the employer's will on the work force. Despite the assurances of the Secretary of State, it constitutes a change in the law, and I urge Conservative Members to consider very seriously, and to uphold, the rights of individual trade unionists by voting against it.

Mr. Etherington: I am proud to declare my interest as a member, since 1957, of what was then the Amalgamated Engineering Union and as a member of the National Union of Mineworkers from 1963 to the present. I am sponsored by the National Union of Mineworkers. I am quite willing to let anyone know the extent of that sponsorship and I am very proud of it. There is nothing secret; everything is quite transparent.

I was interested to note that, in seeking to justify his support for Lords amendment No. 8, the Secretary of State repeatedly referred to the need for "clarity" and "clarification". I had always understood that one sought clarity and clarification when something was opaque, not when it was transparent. If ever anything has been transparent it has been the Government's manoeuvrings in seeking to strengthen the rights and powers of employers against those whom they have the privilege to employ.

I have never been and have never wanted to be a pedantic lawyer, although I have great respect for the legal profession and, indeed, for hon. Members with a legal background. As we talked of the various sections and subsections of legislation going back as far as 1975—and even, on one occasion, as far as 1908—it crossed my mind that it was rather unfortunate that we were spending so much time discussing the law, as this is not a legal but a political matter. It is about power—and, in particular, about the creation of more power for the Government's supporters, at their request.

It was interesting to hear the differing views that were advanced about what the relationship between employers and employees should be. I agree that, in an ideal world, it would be nice to achieve consensus. I have had the pleasure for many years of working in an industry—in fact, in more than one industry—where, for most of the time, there was consensus. I was pleased to hear the speech of the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley). I hope that he will not be offended if I say that much of what he said reminded me of the attitude that Lloyd George took during the Liberal Government of 1906, when he supported the rights of employees on many occasions. I say that as a compliment to the hon. Gentleman.

I was interested, too, to hear that the hon. Member for Eltham is a member of the Institute of Personnel Management. In the rather better days before 1979, I attended a diploma course on industrial relations at Durham university at which I rubbed shoulders with personnel managers of firms with which I had nothing to do. We used to discuss something that I never hear mentioned now—pluralism. The hon. Member for Eltham understands that concept well. Pluralism is fairly simple: it means that the employer has a right to look after his interests and that those who work for him have a right to look after theirs. That is a basic human right that the Government seem to be seeking to destroy.

That philosophy applied for many years in this country. Many Governments—even on this occasion, Conservative Governments—have introduced legislation that has improved the rights of workers in relation to their employers. I am talking not about their individual rights, but about their rights at the workplace and in relation to their employer. Conservative Governments have introduced such improvements, although one has to go back quite a number of years to find examples. In case any member of the Government should be interested in the subject, may I recommend a book called "The History of British Trade Unionism", written by Henry Pelling, from which they will learn how pluralism developed.

Under that system, if a reasonable equation was arrived at between the rights of employers and the rights of their employees and if each was able to look after his own interests, conflicts could be resolved where they arose. We have seen that happen under various Governments—particularly in wartime, when we had compulsory arbitration and the protection of employment and so on—and it worked. For most of my teenage years and, indeed, for 20 years thereafter, I lived in a society that recognised that fact. Since 1979, however, all that has changed. I find it appalling that the Government, in the six pieces of employment legislation that they have introduced—which have been referred to extensively—have referred only to improvements in the individual rights of trade union members. "Improving that right in relation to whom?", one asks. Machinery can be set whereby anyone who has a complaint against his union and decides not to use the democratic means within that union can get redress and get legal aid. People can act against the trade union of which they are a member, but not against their employer. I defy Conservative Members to point to one piece of legislation that has been passed since they came to power that would fit those criteria. The Government have gone out of their way to look after the interests of those who

[Mr. Etherington]

sponsor them, all the time trying to give the impression that they are being even-handed and looking after the rights of the individual.

9 pm

The Government do not seem to understand—or perhaps they understand only too well—that individual rights within a collective remain individual rights. They cannot be separated. We cannot overlook the many years in Britain which were prosperous for the country and for near-full employment. People were working full time and while there were bound to be disparities between wage rates, the vast majority of people were content in their jobs.

The Conservatives would argue that through those years the trade unions had too much power. That is not borne out by the facts. Trade union members have rights across the spectrum of life—affecting housing, the law and so on—but, unfortunately, the least rights they have affect their very trade unionism. Their trade union rights are among the poorest in the European Community.

We have heard much about the rights of collectives in Japan. We have been told for years how marvellous the Japanese system is. It cannot be that good, or the British Government would have given trade unionists in this country the same rights as their counterparts in Japan.

The debate is not about the amendment but about a Government who are paranoid over the so-called power of trade unions. They are desperate to ensure that, whenever there is conflict between employer and employee, they side with the employer, regardless of the circumstances of the case. We have seen that time and again since 1979. I have yet to hear a Minister say that an employer is wrong and a trade union is right.

Labour Members are constantly taunted about the relationship between our party and the trade union movement. I regard it as a healthy, open relationship which allows people to have their say and in which democracy prevails. Conservative Members are the last people on earth to lecture us about individual rights because they do not begin to understand what democracy means, unless and until it affects their interests and power and the way in which they manipulate that power.

We have been told by the Conservatives for years that if employers and business can be free, the country will become prosperous. We are seeing the results of Government efforts in that respect. The manufacturing base has gone down at probably the same rate of knots as the power of trade unions has been reduced, yet the Government still do not see the link. Once the Government begin to remove people's rights and extinguish equality between employers and employees, strife is created, and that strife has a debilitating effect on the economy.

I accept that there are good employers, but this legislation is not aimed at them. It is a panacea for bad employers and there are plenty of those. There are plenty of sweatshop employers in Britain. People are being paid £1·50 an hour for working 50 or even 60 hours a week. The Government think that there is something wrong with people asking for a 48-hour week. Supporters of the Government are earning a thousand times more than some low-paid workers and Conservative Members think that that is fair and equitable.

There are no market forces for trade unions because the Government have gradually been ensuring that that market is shut off and the shut-off has not been all that gradual in some cases. The Government preach free market economics, with employers being free to compete and do what they like. But people representing working folk cannot have that same freedom. They must be curtailed.

Conservative propaganda blaming the trade unions for everything has been good over the years. They have neutered the trade unions and the country is in a bigger mess than ever. If Goebbels could return to life, he would realise what a failure he had been compared with the indoctrination that the Conservatives have undertaken. But the public are becoming wiser and trade unions are gaining in popularity. That is another reason why employers must be bolstered. I should like to develop that theme in detail, but I would anger my Whips if I continued for much longer. This will let the country as a whole see the unfairness of the Government. I hope that the hon. Member for Eltham and other hon. Members will see the sense in voting against the amendment and getting back to a decent system of industrial relations.

Mr. Burden: When I was reading the amendment, I cast my eyes to the top of the Bill that it was supposed to be amending. The title of the Bill has always mystified me a little. The first part of it, relating to trade union reform, is confusing, because the Bill does not contain a great deal of reform. One finds a lot of red tape as far as trade unions are concerned but not a great deal in terms of reform.

I may be a naive sort of soul but, when I see the term "employment rights", I think that the Bill should contain some rights for employees. Any extra rights that have been given to individual employees were opposed by the Government in the first place—but they were forced to accept them by Europe. In Committee and on Second and Third Reading, I heard Ministers explain and claim how the rights for employees are increasing. When they were about to abolish the wages councils, they said that it was not about cutting pay but about improving the rights of employees and employers as free agents to get together to negotiate rates for the job.

I could not see—I have not come across it since that time—a large number of low-paid workers rushing forward to thank the Government for their extra rights. Perhaps the cat was let out of the bag by Lord Ullswater on the rights that the Government were talking about. His words in another place have been echoed in many ways by Conservative Members tonight:

> "It is, of course, the employer's right to decide exactly how he wants to negotiate with his staff. After all, no one but the employer in question can know all the relevant circumstances and can decide what is best for his business. It has always been this Government's policy to ensure that employers have the freedom to act in this way."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 24 May 1993; Vol. 546, c. 22.]

When the Government talk about employment rights, it is rather one-sided. Employment rights exist only as far as the employer is concerned and of course it is not uniform. If an employer decides to exercise rights in a way in which the Government disapprove, the law is changed to restrict them. For example, if an employer decides, in free agreement with his or her employees, to enter into a union membership agreement, that is restricted by law. There are no rights or freedoms as far as that is concerned. If an employer decides that he or she would have an

agreement with trade unions for check-off, that is restricted because the Government changed the law. But if an employer's purpose is to discourage collective bargaining—if the employer wants that right—suddenly the Government are prepared to change the law.

Within six days of a court judgment coming out which the Government found inconvenient, we had an announcement that the law would be changed. Suddenly we had a willingness to legalise bribery, cajoling and punishing people simply for saying that they want to use their trade union membership. The Government say that it is nothing to do with trade union membership—they say that they uphold the right of an individual to remain a member of a trade union—except of course in the case of GCHQ. They are happy for people to be trade union members in most situations, as long as they do not avail themselves of the benefits of membership.

The amendment is not simply an attack on collective bargaining and collective organisation; it also jeopardises the right of employees to choose to have individual representation by a trade union. If that does not jeopardise the right of trade union membership, I sometimes wonder where the Government's logic would lead if it were applied to political parties.

I can imagine Ministers saying, "We have changed the law for political parties. Of course, we have no objection whatever to people joining the political party of their choice." The only thing that is not allowed is for that political party to put up a candidate for election. That is the logic behind the Government's amendment.

This is a charter to bully trade unionists and deny them bonuses. It is a charter to ensure that it is always a trade union member who ends up working the anti-social shift. It is a charter that says that a trade union member can be denied promotion. Yet the Government say that this has nothing to do with victimisation of trade union members and that it is just permitting an employer, in the words of Lord Ullswater, to

"achieve an organisational or strategic purpose."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 24 May 1993, Vol. 546, c. 23.]

I wonder, considering those terms, whether the noble Lord writes the scripts for "Yes Minister".

I do not know where some Tory Members have been in recent years. Are they unaware of the fear of many employees, particularly in firms, of which I have had some experience immediately prior to privatisation, when the blue-eyed boy or blue-eyed girl syndrome is so clear? Employees fear that, if they step out of line or do something of which their employer disapproves—in some cases, that could easily be merely being a trade union member in an area of the business where the employer feels that trade union membership is inappropriate—they could be discriminated against and find their career prospects in jeopardy. If the amendment is agreed, in future their pay would also be in jeopardy.

The amendment panders to all the worst prejudices of the Conservative party. I am pleased that some Conservative Members have principles and are prepared to accept that it is not necessarily contradictory for Conservative Members to support the right of an individual to practise trade union membership rather than just to have it, but it seems that most Tory Members will troop through the Lobby with the majority tonight.

They will not recognise that they would improve industrial relations if they ensured that workers who have been subject to such discrimination, for example at Timex, had greater rights. They would be doing something positive for the workers who have been dismissed at Burnsalls in the west midlands near my constituency. Such would be the positive signs of a Government who were interested in improving industrial relations rather than just knocking trade unions once again.

I would applaud the introduction of a statutory right to guarantee trade union recognition if a majority of workers in a particular firm supported it. That is not the purpose of tonight's debate. At present, trade union recognition can be removed, as has been the case for a long period, purely by an employer's diktat. Tonight the Government are taking that an important stage further: they are not just giving employers the right to derecognise the collective organisation of employees, however many employees want it, but the right to jeopardise the practical realisation of trade union membership itself. That is almost certainly contrary to European law, as many of my hon. Friends have explained.

Journalists near my constituency who work for Reed Elsevier have approached me. Why, they ask, because they happen to work in Britain, can they be pushed, cajoled and shoved to accept individual contracts with no recourse, whereas people who work for the same firm in other parts of Europe have rights?

No Minister or Conservative Member has made any mention today of the buzz words that they use so often —"the citizens charter". I wonder why? Perhaps it is because, for the Government, when it comes to trade union membership, the rights to citizenship suddenly go out of the window. As my hon. Friends have already said, trade union members will end up with fewer rights than those enjoyed by the members of any other organisation.

In years to come, people will study the debate and work out the Government's objectives. They will see through the statements made in another place and the protestations of Ministers and Conservative Members about their support for trade union membership. People will come to appreciate how the law was changed, and they will see that act as the latest in a long series of attacks on the rights of ordinary people to work collectively to ensure basic rights of pay, conditions of service and fair treatment. It is that principle of organisation and working together that gets right up the Government's nose. The Opposition will continue to support the principle of collective organisation, however, because it is an essential part of democracy. But it seems that democracy is something that the Government do not understand.

9.15 pm

Mr. Winnick: I declare my interest. Although I am not sponsored, my constituency party receives a rather modest sum from the union of which I am a member.

As my hon. Friends have said, the Government are motivated by their attitude of sheer malice towards trade unions. They have displayed that attitude since they were elected 14 years ago. My hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) said that the final objective of the Government will be to abolish trade unions. Even this Government will not do that, but they will do their utmost, as they have done in the past 14 years, to undermine, weaken and erode the role of trade unions in the workplace. Even the Lords amendment, despicable though it is, should not cause any surprise to my hon. Friends.

[Mr. Winnick]

If there is any question about where the Government stand on trade union rights and recognition, I refer hon. Members to an Adjournment debate on 11 March on the bitter industrial dispute at Burnsall's factory in the west midlands. That dispute continues and it should cause grave concern, because the work force have been treated with utter contempt.

My hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds), as the constituency Member, carried out his duties and raised the matter in the House. It is interesting to note what the then Under-Secretary of State for Employment said in that debate. Certainly the Minister of State would echo his remarks, word for word. My hon. Friend stressed that the work force had held ballots and that they had unanimously called for their trade union to be recognised. The Under-Secretary of State said of trade union recognition:

"To argue that because there was a ballot in favour of recognition Burnsall's should agree to that can only be founded on the completely unacceptable principle that recognition arrangements can properly be decided by workers alone. That cannot be correct, as it fails to take proper account of the employers' necessary freedom to decide the terms on which they will work."—*[Official Report*, 11 March 1993; Vol. 220, c. 1207.]

That attitude illustrates that no matter what ballots are held and no matter the wishes of the workers, they make no difference.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *indicated assent.*

Mr. Winnick: The Minister agrees. In his opinion and that of the Government, the management should be the deciding factor. No matter how many ballots may be held, no matter their unanimous result, the wishes of the work force are of no interest to the Government. Despite what the Government have said about balloting, the citizens charter and the rest of the cosmetic nonsense, ultimately, they believe that the management of the company should be the decisive factor and the work force should do as they are told.

Mr. Forsyth: No doubt the hon. Gentleman will recall that, when a Labour Government introduced the measure requiring compulsory recognition of trade unions, it was later abandoned. Even the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service said that the whole thing was unworkable.

Mr. Winnick: As the Minister knows, there is a difference between the compulsory recognition of unions and saying—which no Labour Minister would dream of saying—that it makes no difference what is done in ballots or what decisions are reached by the work force in secret ballots. "It cannot be decided by workers alone": that illustrates the background of the debate and the contemptuous attitude of the Government towards the working people of our country, particularly the millions of people who want to belong to a trade union.

When we criticised, attacked and denounced communist and fascist dictatorships, time and again the yardstick that we used to define them was not simply the denial of the right to vote—a fundamental right—but another yardstick associated with civil liberty: the right of assembly, the right to vote secretly to elect Governments and to have a free press. It was the right to belong to a genuine union and have that union recognised at one's place of employment. It is a sad commentary on today's society that so many people are penalised for belonging to a trade union.

The Court of Appeal made the position perfectly clear. When it was deciding on the cases that form the background to the amendment, it said that the aim was to penalise people for being members of a union or to deter them from remaining members. If the amendment is passed, it will be used by countless other employers to try to bribe people to stop them belongong to a trade union —they will deny employees pay increases. Today, that is illegal. If the amendment is carried because the Government are able to organise their majority, such a practice will become legitimate.

When my right hon. and hon. Friends say that the Government are corrupt, they are right—the Government are corrupted by power. If anyone has any illusions—none of my hon. Friends is likely to have them—they need only look on pages 1 and 3 of today's edition of *The Independent* to see that the Conservative party, to which Ministers belong, was willing to accept money from whatever sources, no matter how often it was told that the company making the donation was breaking the law. I am, of course, referring to Nadir. Ministers were not concerned that Mr. Nadir had not revealed the contributions in the company accounts.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The hon. Gentleman's remarks do not seem to have much to do with amendment No. 8.

Mr. Winnick: My remarks are relevant to the fact that the Government are corrupt and determined to penalise people for belonging to a trade union. The Government are only too happy to accept money from sources which, at the time, must have seemed dubious and are now known to have been criminal. Therefore, I hope that not just one Conservative Member but a few more will have the honesty and integrity to know that what is being done today is absolutely wrong. When the Government's record is considered, the amendment will be the evidence of how corrupt and sick they have become.

Mr. McAllion: I declare an interest as I am sponsored by the National Union of Civil and Public Servants. Probably more important is the fact that I represent constituents who have today become the latest victims of the collusion between the Government and bad employers who want to use mass unemployment to drive down the wages and conditions of workers in this country. I shall set the record straight on the relevance of the Timex dispute in Dundee to the debate.

The Timex management and the authors of the clause share a common objective—the destruction of organised labour. The Timex management took a hard line at the start of the dispute when the issue at stake was the rotation of lay-offs because of a lack of contracts. Management was completely instransigent and refused to make any concessions to the workers, in the knowledge that that would lead to a strike. When the workers were outside the factory gates they could be sacked and Timex could seek to employ a new non-union work force whose members would accept personal contracts containing vicious cuts in wages and conditions.

That approach did not work because of the magnificent fight by the sacked workers and the magnificent support that they received from the labour and trade union

movement throughout the United Kingdom. The amendment is a Government attempt at a completely different approach which will have the same effect. Instead of someone who agrees to a personal contract suffering a cut in wages, as happened at Timex, those who agree to such a contract will receive extra wages.

That approach will completely undermine the point of belonging to a trade union. What is the point of paying trade union dues when, by way of a personal contract, one can receive higher wages than could be obtained through collective bargaining? People will be discouraged from belonging to trade unions and when membership declines and the unions disappear, the employer will have a completely free hand in personal contracts and will impose whatever cuts in wages and conditions he thinks fit.

Perhaps some Conservative Members think that that will not happen. I was a member of the Industry-Parliament Trust with IBM which prided itself on never having trade unions because, through personal contracts, it guaranteed that none of its workers would ever face compulsory redundancy. IBM has now hit hard times and its workers know that the company is not true to its word because they are being made compulsorily redundant.

The Government say that they are proud of their record on industrial relations. I hope that they are proud of what happened in Dundee today. The Government have advertised in German newspapers for investors to come here because of cheap labour. They should not be surprised when some of the companies that are already here take them at their word and try to impose vicious cuts in wages.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson (Aberdeen, South) *rose*——

Mr. McAllion: I am not giving way, because the Front-Bench speakers are anxious to deliver the winding-up speeches. If the hon. Gentleman had any interest at all in the welfare of workers in Dundee or anywhere else in the United Kingdom, he would be on the Opposition side of the House. I shall give way briefly.

Mr. Robertson: Will the hon. Gentleman take two minutes to explain the service that trade unions rendered in Dundee five years ago when they lost the area the massive investment of a Ford plant?

Mr. McAllion: That is not true. The hon. Gentleman well knows that the union that he backed at that time, the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union, was today the victim of the actions of multinationals.

If the Government are at all interested in helping workers, instead of shackling the trade unions they should do something about the over-mighty power of multinationals which are running riot across the country against the interests of workers.

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): I was not in the House during the passage of most of the trade union legislation of the past decade. However, my understanding from tales of folklore is that the Government Benches were full of baying Tory Members hounding the trade unions. Now there is an interesting contrast. Numerous Conservative Members have said that this legislation is absolutely vital. We are led to believe that without it this country will never recover from the deep recession, yet the Tories are running out of speakers.

The hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) started to speak at 7.53 in a debate that it is agreed will finish at about 10 o'clock. Embarrassed Whips were sent to the Tea Rooms and managed to drag out another Tory, the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter), who delivered a perfunctory few remarks at 8.35. I hope that the Tories are embarrassed, but it is more likely that they are bored because even they are getting fed up with bashing the unions, as they have done day in and day out for the past decade.

I was interested to hear how the new Secretary of State would tackle the amendment with which he has been landed. He comes to the Department with a reputation for decency, generosity of spirit and liberalism. *[Interruption.]* Those are the stories I hear in the Tea Room; I do not speak from personal experience. He did not make a good justification for that. I had the impression that he was embarrassed by what he had to say. Certainly the Minister of State will not suffer from that affliction. His only embarrassment will be that the amendment does not remove completely the right to be a member of a trade union as he would have liked.

9.30 pm

My understanding of the Secretary of State's analysis and the reasons behind the amendment was that they had nothing to do with collective bargaining. He tried to tease union membership and collective bargaining apart, to separate them from each other and therefore to suggest that the amendment had no effect on trade union membership. That is somewhat disingenuous. As many of my hon. Friends have said, the two issues are closely connected.

If one is a member of a trade union but cannot exercise that right, it removes de facto the right to be a trade unionist. My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) used as an example the credit card that cannot be used. My example is that the right to free speech is valueless if one can exercise it only in a sound-proofed room with no one else there. It was the same when the Minister tried to make that disingenuous separation between trade union membership and collective bargaining. It is not just collective bargaining that will be lost; it is the right for a trade union to represent its members with their employer on any issue other than health and safety. It effectively denudes the member of any rights whatsoever and is therefore a direct attack. So the Minister's first point was wrong.

A further important issue is the financial inducement or bribery that is involved. The amendment legalises bribery and corruption. That should be anathema to hon. Members on both sides of the House. Even the Minister was embarrassed by that.

The Minister tried to justify the amendment by saying that it was just a clarification of the law. I am not a lawyer, but, by golly, we should beware anyone saying that something is just a clarification of the law. The law is a many and varied thing that works in many ways. We should beware the lawyer who is just here to be helpful and simply wants to clarify the law.

The Government got themselves into some difficulty in justifying that. First, the Minister put forward the proposition that the law was absolutely clear cut and straightforward. If that was the case, I am not sure why it needed clarifying, but it was clarified.

Another argument put forward by the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North was that the law was not clear at all;

in fact, it was a shambles and everyone had different interpretations of it. They could at least have come up with the same excuses and briefed one another better.

The reason behind the confusion is that that argument is wrong. I agree with the Minister that the law was clear. The Court of Appeal has made it clear. If it was not clear, the court has clarified it. Everyone agrees about that. There was no stream of cases against employers trying to remove the rights of trade union members because employers knew that they would be in breach of section 146 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992. The Minister proposed not clarification, but simply changing the law once again to the benefit of the employers. Once again, it was an attack on the trade unions.

The Minister's third point was that somehow or other the amendment is not an attack on the trade unions. I would believe that a bit more if an amendment put forward in the other place had been accepted. Baroness Turner of Camden moved an amendment to insert, among other things,

"not to discriminate against employees who were members of an independent trade union".

That would have made it clear that, however the law was changed, it would not discriminate against trade unionists.

Viscount Ullswater indulged in some wonderful double-speak when he said:

"It would provide that in a situation where a tribunal has evidence of two purposes for an employer's action and where the clause provides that it shall therefore consider the negotiating purpose to be the relevant purpose, it will only do so if there is not additional evidence of a principal purpose to discriminate against employees who are trade union members."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 24 May 1993; Vol. 546, c. 88-89.]

That is just a start. He says that again, two or three paragraphs later, in many more words. In other words, the purpose was clearly to discriminate against trade unions. The law was clear. The Government have confused it. We shall be back in the law courts again seeking further clarification of the procedure.

The amendment was slipped in at the last minute in an underhand, sneaky, sleekit way without the opportunity for due consideration. It is a mark of the Government's weakness. Here they are, unable to accept the Court of Appeal's ruling. They pretend that they are a macho Government, show their weakness and immediately change the law. They do not even wait for the matter to go to appeal in the other place. They do not consult anyone else. They simply get in there while they can and change the law in order to establish that, with all their powers, they can do what they like. That is not a sign of strength; it is a sign of weakness, ably reflected by the Government.

The amendment also shows how the Government are in thrall to management. No matter what the Court of Appeal says, no matter what their international obligations, no matter what common justice dictates, no matter what decency suggests, everything in industrial law has to be for the benefit of management and employers; they are the only ones who have rights.

Whenever there was a conflict in Committee between employee and employer and management, the Government always came down on the side of the employer, as if they had some inalienable right, as if there were some inherent law, such as the law of gravity or Newton's third law of motion, be it ethical or physical, which I never got to the bottom of, a right not given to employees but always given to employers. The Government are in the thrall of management. When management and employers say jump, the Government jump on their behalf.

Not only was the amendment introduced in a sneaky, sleekit way at the last minute, without consultation, not quite at the dead of night, but certainly as the night was drawing in, but the Government indulge in double-speak. The Conservative research department brief on employment and training, a laughable document which is a good read for anyone who has not read the *Dandy* or the *Beano* for a while, says:

"Conservative Governments have transformed Britain's poor industrial relations record and have created"—

this is the Government's aim—

"a fairer balance between employers and trade unions."

The brief goes on to say that the Government's aims are

"to defend individual liberty"—

tell that to people—

". . . and to restore a fairer balance between employers and trade unions; and to make remedies available".

The Government's idea of a fairer balance is simply once again to remove the rights of employees and hand all powers and rights to the all-powerful employers.

It is a pity that the clause has not been given due consideration. It is probably technically flawed; certainly it would benefit from further debate. I have already dealt with the argument that it is not about bashing the trade unions. An amendment tabled in another place, which was turned down by the Government, would have clarified the matter.

I believe that the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) referred to the words

"the tribunal shall regard the purpose mentioned in paragraph (a) . . . as the purpose for which the employer took the action, unless it considers that the action was such as no reasonable employer would take".

I am familiar and quite happy with the phrase

"such as no reasonable employer would take";

similar phrases are used in medical evidence. References are made to reasonable doctors with equal standards behaving in a reasonable manner in, for instance, cases involving negligence.

As the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery pointed out, that is not the crux of the amendment, although it will certainly give employers a field day. The crux is in the words that follow:

"having regard to the purpose mentioned in paragraph (a)."

Perhaps the Minister will clarify that. Does it mean that paragraph (a) must be judged reasonable or otherwise—which would be the decent thing—or does it merely mean that the action taken must be reasonable in order to achieve the purpose in paragraph (a)? That purpose could be entirely unreasonable, but perhap that will not be considered, provided that the steps taken are themselves reasonable. In such circumstances, the test of reasonableness will relate not to the action taken by the employer against his employee, but to the steps that he takes to achieve his aim. *[Interruption.]* My manager is giving me a tick-tack message. As I am generally well behaved and an extremely reasonable chap in both action and demeanour, I shall conclude my speech.

Tonight, we are preparing to introduce yet another piece of trade union legislation. All the trade union legislation that has been introduced in the past decade has been predicated on the premise that Britain's industrial decline can be set at the unions' door: it has all been caused by trade union militancy. If only legislation could be

passed to neuter the unions, unemployment would suddenly cease to exist; there would be no balance of payments deficit and no public sector borrowing requirement; and manufacturing investment would go up and up. What do we have today? We have a rip-roaring balance of payments deficit; public sector borrowing is over the top; 4 million people are unemployed; and the economy is in disarray.

The Government's legislation was based on a false premise. It has not worked, and it never will: nor will the amendment.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) accused Conservative Members of having run out of speakers at 7.53 pm. Opposition Members ran out of argument at about 4.38 pm, two minutes after the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) stood up.

I do not think anyone could deny that we have examined the amendment in a thorough and detailed manner. We have heard conflicting views about its meaning. The Opposition have exaggerated and misrepresented its effects in an attempt to portray it as an attack on the rights of trade unionism; the hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) even told us how to spot the seeds of totalitarianism. Let me tell her that totalitarianism begins with socialism, not with a belief in free enterprise or the market forces so hated by the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Etherington).

My hon. Friends the Members for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter), for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) and for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) brought some common sense to our proceedings, giving us the benefit of their legal and professional training and expertise.

It should be absolutely clear that the Government value highly the protection that section 146 has offered, and will continue to offer, individual employees. It has an important role to play in ensuring that employers do not victimise individual employees to persuade them to become, or to cease to be, trade union members. It has no part to play in collective and strategic issues such as an employer's decision to introduce personal contracts for his work force.

We have had claims about the effects of the new clause from Opposition Members which, even by the high standards of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, have set new records. His claims about bribes to leave unions and penalties for remaining in unions are unfounded, exaggerated and nonsensical. He was at it again yesterday. He told the BBC's one o'clock news that:

"The amendment will make it lawful for an employer to bribe or punish an employee if they are a member."

He told Channel 4 news yesterday:

"The Government is proposing to change the law to encourage employers to deter people from being in unions or to penalise them for doing so."

I must tell my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) that it was not the Court of Appeal whom I accused of talking poppycock, but the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras and the others who joined him in misrepresenting the position.

The amendment is not about trade union membership. It is about an employer's right to organise his business as he sees fit, and an employee's right to accept arrangements that can improve his or her terms and conditions.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eltham also suggested that we might idemnify the loser for costs if either of the two Court of Appeal cases goes to the House of Lords. Any appeal would be on the basis of the law as it currently exists. The new clause will not apply retrospectively and I do not, therefore, believe that we would be justified in acceding to that request.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My hon. Friend's crucial point is fair. Section 146 still exists and will continue to exist even if the amendment is written into the law. My hon. Friend will agree that the industrial tribunal found, as a matter of fact, that the actions of the employers in each case wholly negated union membership. Can he tell the House whether, in his view—it will be decided by the courts in the end—Mr. Palmer and Mr. Wilson would have been unsuccessful if this amendment had been written into law when their cases were heard by the industrial tribunal?

Mr. Forsyth: I should not be drawn on that matter. The amendment is clear and it is for the courts to determine, on the basis of the facts, what will apply. The employment appeal tribunal highlighted a lack of clarity in the law and that is why the amendment is required.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) and the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden asked me to put on record the meaning of the words which include a test of reasonableness. The wording is included in the clause to provide a further test of the employer's action. If the tribunal is satisfied that there is evidence that the employer has a purpose.

"to further a change in his relationship with all or any . . . of his employees",

it must also be satisfied that the action was not

"such as no reasonable employer would take"

to further that purpose. Otherwise, the action could still be found to have been taken for a purpose within section 146, and therefore to have been unlawful. I hope that that helps hon. Members. It should help my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham with the substance of his question, if not the case that he put to me.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery also asked why we had not waited for the outcome of any eventual House of Lords hearing. My hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge made the key point that even if an appeal were to be heard and whether or not the Court of Appeal judgments were reversed, the difficulties would not necessarily be resolved.

The purpose of the courts is to interpret the law as it is enacted by Parliament. It has become clear that this section of the law as presently drafted has caused, and is continuing to cause, difficulties for the tribunals and the courts and it is right that we should take steps to clarify it.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) said in an excellent speech, the Government have made clear their aim to create a climate in which individual effort and performance can be rewarded. In our White Paper, "People, Jobs and Opportunity" which was published before the general election—we fought and won a general election on its basis—paragraph 4.7 says:

"The Government . . . will continue to encourage employers to move away from traditional, centralised collective bargaining towards methods of pay determination which reward individual skills and performance; respond to the wish of individual employees to negotiate their own terms and conditions of employment; and to take full account of business circumstances".

Who could argue with that?

[Mr. Forsyth]

The amendment is entirely consistent with that policy. It will remove an artificial and unintended obstacle to employers who wish to differentiate within their pay structures as they move in that direction.

In response to those such as the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) who have questioned employers' motives in offering incentives to employees who agree to accept personal contracts, let me say that there are perfectly legitimate business reasons for doing so. In a letter to my Department on 24 May—after we had tabled the amendment—the chairman of Associated British Ports explained his company's position as follows:

"Generally, we believe that personal contracts give companies and their customers substantial advantages. We think it is only right, therefore, that those who accept personal contracts receive benefits greater than those who remain within a negotiated employment structure.

The company pays more to an employee who undertakes to work with complete flexibility, and the employment contract permits the company to base remuneration on merit and to withhold an annual pay increase if the company should run into financial difficulties. Basically, an employee who accepts a personal contract is selling a higher value product in the employment market, and should be rewarded accordingly".

I agree with him.

Many employers would echo those sentiments, as would the many thousands of employees who have benefited financially and in terms of personal motivation from the opportunity to be rewarded on the basis of their own commitment and performance. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North. Only the neanderthals in the Opposition and their trade union mentors still adhere to the fallacy that rigid pay structures and equal pay rates for everyone doing the same work are the best way of improving productivity in a modern economy.

Mr. Dobson: If individual contracts are so attractive, why do employers have to offer financial incentives to get people to accept them?

Mr. Forsyth: If the hon. Gentleman is so wedded to the concept of collective bargaining, why are he and his colleagues so worried that people will get more money because they are abandoning collective bargaining? I thought that the Opposition's argument to justify collective bargaining was that it gained a better deal for employees. We have now heard from the Opposition that that is no longer the case.

What sticks in the gullet of members of the Opposition is that improvements in pay and conditions can be achieved by individuals acting on their own initiative, without the precious protection of trade unions and the apparatus of collective bargaining. The Opposition have always been keen to show examples where a trade union can negotiate a better deal for its members, but they cannot bear the thought that people might be able to negotiate a better deal for themselves as individuals.

In attempting to discredit the amendment, the Opposition have succeeded in tying themselves in knots. In attacking the amendment, they have sought to portray it as a new weapon in the hands of employers who want to derecognise trade unions. Perhaps they even believe that it can operate only in that one-sided way.

We certainly do not want to prevent employers from derecognising trade unions, which has been the Government's position since we abolished the previous Labour Government's wholly unworkable statutory recognition legislation in 1980. Even the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service recognised that this legislation could not be made to work and told the Government so. Nor would we want to prevent an employer from recognising one or more trade unions for collective bargaining if it suits his business purposes. The important point is that employers should be free to decide what bargaining arrangements best suit their circumstances at a particular time. That is precisely what the amendment will achieve.

The Opposition ignore entirely the fact that the amendment is even-handed. In the two cases before the Court of Appeal, the employers offered a financial incentive to those who agreed to personal contracts, but the amendment would cover the actions of employers just as much if they decided, for example, to introduce a single union agreement and to offer an incentive to those who agreed to have their pay negotiated under that arrangement. Of course the employer would still be at risk of acting unlawfully if he sought to compel people to join the particular union concerned, just as he would be at risk if he sought to prevent people from being members of any trade union when they agreed to sign personal contracts.

I should have expected the Opposition to welcome an amendment that enabled employers to offer incentives to encourage people to agree to have their pay settled through a single union agreement. After all, the Labour party, despite its much-trumpeted conversion to espousing the rights of the individual, voted against clause 13, which gives individuals greater freedom to join the union of their own choice. Why did they vote against it? They argued that it posed a threat to single-union deals. Never mind that the argument was based on an entirely false premise. Never mind the fact that the unions and the Labour party can at best be described as latter-day converts to the merits of the single union deal. Never mind that Labour's real reason for voting against the clause was to try to protect the power of the trade union bosses and to prop up the creaking edifice of the TUC's so-called Bridlington principles.

Where is the consistency in claiming to uphold the rights of individuals, yet seeking to deny them the right to join the union of their choice? Where is the consistency in upholding the merits of single-union agreements and then arguing against an amendment that would allow employers to offer incentives to promote acceptance of such an arrangement? The only consistency in those arguments—a consistency that runs right through the industrial relations policy of the Labour party—is that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) said, Labour is once again obeying the orders of the TUC and the trade union bosses who still dictate its policies on such matters. Those people are at this very moment fighting a rearguard action to ensure that they can continue to dictate Labour party policies in the future. No one is fooled by the Opposition's claims to represent the interests of the individual. How could they be when the Labour party is so much in thrall to the collectivist ideals of trade unionism and traditional collective bargaining?

I wonder why have we spent whole day in the House debating the amendment. Could it be anything to do with the criticisms of Mr. John Edmonds that the Labour party was not doing enough to fight the cause of the trade union movement? Is that why there has been such an impressive

display of jousting for the trade union barons? Union membership does not carry any automatic right to trade union recognition, or to have pay determined by collective bargaining. Indeed, there have always been many thousands of people who want to belong to trade unions even though their employers do not engage in collective bargaining. There are about 1 million trade unionists who are not covered by collective bargaining. That is one in 10 of all trade union members in Britain. What is the message from the hon. Members for Holborn and St. Pancras and for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) to those people? Presumably it is that their membership cards are worthless, and that they should tear them up and leave the union. The Labour message throughout the debate has been that without collective bargaining there is no proper trade union membership. I hope that that message was heard and received.

This evening, we have seen once again the shallowness of the Opposition's commitment to the individual and the depth of their loyalty to the collectivism of the past. They have not changed their spots. As my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge pointed out, they have consistently opposed our policies to give new rights and protections to trade union members. They have opposed the new right in the Bill for individuals to belong to a union of their choice. They have opposed the new protections for union members who pay their subscriptions by check-off. In the past, they opposed our reforms to outlaw the iniquities of the closed shop, even though that meant denying a job to thousands of individuals. They even opposed our reforms that gave individual trade union members the right to a secret ballot before their union could call on them to go on strike.

The Opposition are driven by the bosses of the trade unions, and it is the Government who have restored individual rights to trade union members. The amendment would allow individual trade union members to exercise choice over the appropriate form for their bargaining arrangements. Many trade union members have already chosen to do so, and many more will do so, no doubt welcoming the freedom given to them by a Conservative Government.

The truth is that Opposition Members will never be free to do what is right for trade union members until they are freed from having to look over their shoulders at the wishes of union leaders, on whom their power depends. That is why the Opposition would deny employers and individuals the flexibility to agree bargaining arrangements that would best reflect performance and reward individual effort. They would reinforce the rigidity of collective bargaining, where the interests of the individual are subordinated to the lowest common denominator.

This amendment will help to create and support flexibility—something to which the Government are firmly committed in the interests of competitiveness, individual motivation and the creation of sustainable jobs. I commend it to the House.

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 297, Noes 275.

Division No. 297] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Ellletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward

Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John

Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alex Meale and
Mr. Dennis Turner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

It being after Ten o'clock, further consideration of the Lords amendments stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business),

That, at this day's sitting, the Lords Amendments to the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill and the Ways and Means Motion may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

Question agreed to.

TRADE UNION REFORM AND EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS BILL

Lords amendments again considered.

Further consideration of Lords amendments adjourned.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

To be further considered tomorrow.

Ways and Means

Crime (Expenditure)

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That provision may be made preventing expenditure involving crime being deducted or being included in expenses of management.—*[Sir John Cope.]*

10.16 pm

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): I shall raise a short point in what I imagine will be a relatively short debate.

The resolution is in general terms, as are all such resolutions. Although its scope is comparatively wide, there must be some limit to exactly how wide it is intended to go. Its purpose is to allow the Government to table amendments to the Finance Bill, which is currently being considered in Committee, to strike at certain payments being claimed as expenses when such payments might involve crime.

The point that I shall address involves the definition and scope of such payments when considering the question of preventing expenditure involving crime. There may well be circumstances in which payments may be claimed as an allowable expense or deduction in the expense of management against the Revenue. For example, I want to know whether it will be possible, within the scope of the resolution, to table amendments that might help the Inland Revenue to identify payments that may not have been claimed as such, although in reality they are payments in connection with crime.

I can envisage a situation in which someone wishes to claim an expense but, for whatever reason, he or she is not willing to disclose the true nature of it. Therefore, I should like the Minister to tell us whether he anticipates that it will be possible within the scope of the resolution to table an amendment or new clause that would require a recipient of a payment to disclose that the payment had been made.

I have two examples in mind. First, I refer to the case of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International. The Inland Revenue and, indeed, others have had reason to question whether many of the payments that have been made are legitimate and whether they are an allowable expense. Clearly, if the recipients of those payments had had to declare the source of them, the job of the Inland Revenue would have been made that much more easy.

The other case is perhaps a live issue. It concerns donations that may have been made by an individual when he or she was insolvent or an individual who may have caused a company over which he or she had control to make payments that involved crime. I have in mind in particular, for example, donations made to a political party where the political party at the time it received the payment may have had no reason to believe that it could have come from money resulting from crime but subsequently realised that that was the case. If, for example, political parties were required to list the sources of donations and payments received, it would make it much easier for the Revenue and other authorities to see where the money had come from and to determine whether it involved crime, as envisaged in the resolution.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that a political party, particularly a political

[Mr. David Winnick]

party represented in the House of Commons, should have the clear, moral and, one hopes, legal responsibility—if the Government accept what my hon. Friend is saying—to ensure that donations, and in Nadir's case substantial donations, made to it, bearing in mind the source and the creditors, are returned promptly, if only to ensure that creditors who are owed money receive it? The political party should not continue with sums which it should never have received in the first place—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is talking outside the scope of the ways and means resolution.

Mr. Darling: I anticipated that at some point, Madam Speaker, you might be moved to make that point, which is why I have tried to contain my remarks within the constraints of the resolution.

I think that I am entitled to ask whether within the scope of the resolution it would be possible for us to to table an amendment requiring a political party to disclose the source of its donations. If it is, we most certainly will do so within the scope of the Finance Bill. I should be grateful if the Paymaster General will let us know what exactly he had in mind in drafting the resolution as he has. It mentions "preventing expenditure involving crime". That seems to be a wholly laudable and praiseworthy objective. Did he have in mind a political party which might receive money that may have come from crime? Do the Government have in mind that resolutions might be tabled to strike at the present practice where payments can be made and political parties are not obliged to reveal the source of the payments, which makes it that much more difficult not just for the Revenue but for the public to draw their conclusions about the nature and characteristics of the recipient, in this case the political party that has received these sums?

10.22 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): It would have been helpful to the House if the Paymaster General, instead of trying to get the resolution through on the nod, had explained its content and purpose. That would have helped Members who are seeking to find out the Government's aim in tabling the resolution. Certainly, on the face of it, it is laudable. As the House knows, it is linked to the Finance Bill Committee and what is tabled there will determine whether the resolution is of benefit. We do not know why the Government have tabled the resolution, which is why we are probing for information. If we were tabling amendments, we would be probing for information.

I echo the sentiments of my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling). Are the Government trying to ensure control over expenditure that is subsequently found to have been based on criminal actions to prevent it from being allowed against tax either directly or for management purposes when the management of a company or part is for criminal purposes? Or is it some other area of activity that they have in mind? Will a general clause to that effect be tabled in the Finance Bill Committee?

Has the resolution been prompted by the fact that the Government find themselves in an extremely embarrassing position—although they are extremely hard faced about it—because they received half a million quid from a man who was facing serious fraud charges? There is no doubt that there must have been some allocation of expenditure in Asil Nadir's company, either directly by that company, or through management expenses, that was involved in criminal activities. No doubt the company was seeking to set those activities against corporation tax. I have no doubt that the resolution is concerned precisely with that point.

If the Government are tabling the resolution to close a loophole, that is welcome to the Labour party and, I hope, to Conservative Members. I hope that they are ashamed that they have been financed by the criminal activities of Polly Peck.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): What about Robert Maxwell?

Mr. Cryer: If Maxwell had been found out earlier, criminal charges might have been levied against him.

If a clause based on the resolution had been passed in a Finance Bill some years ago, any illegal expenditure of a criminal nature by Robert Maxwell would have been revealed in Labour party accounts. The difficulty is that nothing is shown in the Conservative party accounts, because it does not hold them. That is a source of concern not only to Opposition Members but, I very much hope, to Conservative Members.

Mr. Ashby: The Home Affairs Select Committee heard evidence only last week from one gentleman who had asked the Labour party time and again for the source of its funding. It refused to tell him who was donating to it. The hon. Gentleman has got his party quite wrong; it is the most secretive party in the country.

Mr. Cryer: I am not going down roads that would bring me into possible conflict with you, Madam Speaker. I will not get involved in arguments concerning the Home Affairs Select Committee.

I am concerned about the resolution. It should allow the Government to table a clause to the Finance Bill to prevent expenditure involving crime being deducted for tax purposes or included in the expenses of management. If legislation based on the resolution is to have effect, however, the Inland Revenue must know about such expenditure. It cannot know if the necessary information is not provided.

Since a current case is based on the activities of Asil Nadir, it is legitimate to ask why the Conservative party is not prepared to publish its accounts.

Recent revelations have also been made about commercial lobbying organisations. Lobbying is part of the management exercise, because managements use commercial lobbyists. It is quite clear that Asil Nadir used such an organisation to get to the heart of Government by making representations to the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office, the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates), and the President of the Board of Trade, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). The resolution will prevent the expenditure of commercial lobbying organisations.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): What about the watch?

Mr. Cryer: I am not sure whether that would be considered a management expense.

Commercial lobbying organisations are used extensively in this place and it is time that that stopped. It is also time that the report of the Select Committee on Members' Interests, published nearly two years ago, was debated in this place. That is another matter, however, which I am not prepared to discuss because it is outside the scope of the resolution.

There are some important issues involved. It would have helped if, instead of simply trying to allow the measure to slide through on the nod, as I anticipate the Minister hoped, he had explained its purpose. Can he assure the House that, if amendments are tabled in the Committee considering the Finance Bill that ensure that full account is given by political parties when they receive various donations—as they all do—the general public and particularly the Inland Revenue can check whether any criminal activity is involved? They will gain the information retrospectively and, when anyone is found to be conducting criminal activities, it will be possible to ascertain whether any claims are being made for allowance against taxation or management expenses.

If the Government are seeking to save face by not introducing legislation that directly requires all political parties to publish their accounts, we will shrug our shoulders and say that the Government are trying to look a little more dignified in the face of adversity, but we welcome the legislation. If the Government are not introducing the legislation for that purpose, will the Minister assure us that, in Committee, the Government will not oppose such a proposal, which is tabled in the interests of full, democratic accountability and ensures that expenditure or management expenses involving crime are not allowable against tax? That must be a laudable aim, and I expect all Conservative Back Benchers to welcome that attitude—if it is the Government's attitude.

I hope that it is the Government's aim, and I look forward to comprehensive assurances from the Minister on that matter. It is time that the Government took action to get rid of the sleaze that is currently engulfing them. It is a form of corruption of the political processes in this country which is bringing into disrepute, not only the Conservative party, but perfectly honest and decent members of the Conservative party who are completely opposed to it. They are also being engulfed in sleaze.

10.32 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): I suspect that the hon. Members for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) and for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) would not be popular if the *Daily Mail* newspaper group found that it could not obtain tax relief on the payments that it is having to make to its pension fund to make up for the money that was stolen from the fund.

I suspect that my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General will tell the House that the measure will provide a ways and means cover for an amendment which I believe, following correspondence that I have had with my right hon. Friend, is likely to be tabled. The amendment would be designed to ensure that, if a business is feeling forced to make illegal payments for illegal purposes to an outside organisation, that will no longer be liable for tax relief. If the measure is as simple as that, I think that the Opposition would want to support it.

10.33 pm

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): Does the resolution involve any change in the practice of the Inland Revenue in disclosing information about taxpayers' affairs to the police and the prosecuting authorities? In tribute to the late Sir Alan Herbert, who made great sport in literature from the anomalies involved in taxing prostitution and suggested that the commissioners of the Inland Revenue could be prosecuted for living off immoral earnings, may I ask whether any change in practice in that aspect of the law is envisaged?

10.34 pm

The Paymaster General (Sir John Cope): The answer to both questions of my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) is no. There is no change in practice in relation to disclosure to the police or immoral earnings.

The purpose of the resolution is to permit the Government to introduce what now appears as new clause 8 on the Finance Bill amendment paper relating to expenditure involving crime. That is the amendment's sole purpose. It is not for me to define the scope of the resolution in full. If hon. Members have suggestions which they think are within the remit of the resolution and the House is wise enough to pass it, they must see what they can do to carry through their suggestions.

Nothing in the motion extends the Revenue's powers to seek information, and I remind the House that political donations are disallowed for tax purposes. The proposed new clause does not apply in any way to that matter.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) asked for information to be made available not just to the Inland Revenue but to the public on the source of donations. I remind the hon. Gentleman that all information that the Inland Revenue receives about the affairs of taxpayers is rightly confidential. That is how it should be and how it will remain.

Mr. Darling: I would certainly not advocate that the Inland Revenue should disclose the affairs of a taxpayer to anyone who is not entitled in law to receive such information. I said that if political parties had to disclose the source of their money in a register that was open to inspection by the public, both the Inland Revenue and the public could see who had made payments. If the Revenue or another authority suspected that payments had been made by someone who they suspected was engaged in illegal activity, they could follow the payment from source to clarify matters. I seek a degree of openness, especially by the Conservative party in the light of what has happened to its donor Mr. Asil Nadir.

Sir John Cope: The proposed new clause and the resolution that makes it possible do not address that point for any political party, nor should they in the context of tax legislation. The resolution will ensure the introduction of new clause 8, which is in the selection list of the Committee. That clause would allow the Revenue, when computing income for tax purposes, to disallow payments which themselves constitute the commission of a criminal offence by the payer. They would be bribes of one sort or another contrary to the Prevention of Corruption Act 1916 and the prevention of terrorism Act. The new clause is carefully directed.

Mr. Cryer: Would it be applicable to someone who wanted to procure a knighthood or other honour by way of political donations? That sort of thing happens. As it is a crime involving the corruption of public bodies, it would surely be covered by the resolution's general proposal.

Sir John Cope: That may be so if the payment constituted a criminal offence in the circumstances that the hon. Gentleman suggests. If it did, it would be covered by the new clause.

Mr. Winnick: I understand that the resolution tries to ensure that companies do not profit from crime. For that reason, we obviously welcome it, and that will be made clear in future debates on the Finance Bill. Would not it be consistent to make it clear that political parties should not profit from crime? The Government rightly say that companies should not profit from crime. If there is any evidence that a party, say, the Conservative party, has received money from a criminal source to buy a knighthood or anything else, should not that party make sure that the money is returned? I refer to the Nadir business, because the Conservative party has undoubtedly received money from a corrupt and criminal source.

Sir John Cope *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Before the Minister replies to that intervention, may I say that an extremely narrow point is being debated. I hope that it will not provide a platform for a general and irrelevant debate.

Sir John Cope: I think that the hon. Gentleman has misunderstood the point of the new clause, which is to attack not a company that profits from crime but a payment made by a company, which is not a profit but a loss as it is a payment. It refers to a payment which a company or an individual makes which itself constitutes a criminal offence. The hon. Gentleman has misunderstood the purpose of it. It is the other way round. It may be that he did not misunderstand it but was trying to make another point. If I responded to it, I would fall foul of the strictures of the Chair, and I am not prepared to do that.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That provision may be made preventing expenditure involving crime being deducted or being included in expenses of management.

PETITION

Pensions (Payment)

10.39 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): This petition has more than 4,000 signatures and has been collected on the street and door to door and in post offices in my constituency of Cardiff, West following the way in which pensioners and others were scandalised and put into a state of deep anxiety by the pilot project by the Department of Social Security to change the method of payment of pensions and benefits from payment via the Post Office to payment by automatic credit transfer to banks and building society accounts.

I shall read out the petition, having described it briefly. It states:

We, the undersigned wish to express our opposition to any proposals implemented by Her Majesty's Government which would result in the public not having the right to have their state pensions and benefits paid through the Post Office. We believe that the freedom to have them paid through the Post Office is vital and that the Post Office performs a central function to those who currently collect their benefits and pensions from it and that the withdrawal of this right will involve the closure of many post offices and sub post offices which are vital to communities and to the people who currently use them. We therefore request that the House of Commons urge Her Majesty's Government to withdraw its proposals and continue to allow payment of pensions and benefits through the Post Office.

To lie upon the Table.

Standish Hospital, Stroud

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

10.41 pm

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): I am grateful for the opportunity to initiate the debate. I apologise to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for keeping you up half an hour longer than might otherwise be the case and hope you will forgive me. In all probability, if I had not done so somebody else would have done so.

I am also grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for attending the debate. I am sure that, as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, he is a veteran of such occasions. Finally, I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson), the Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Minister of State. If he does not mind my referring to him as a conduit, he is a very efficient conduit in a Department where it is important that there should be close liaison between Ministers and Back Benchers, and I thank him for his efforts.

May I now voice some concern about the proposals to close Standish hospital which is situated in my constituency between Stroud and the city of Gloucester and replace it with a new extension to the Gloucestershire Royal hospital.

I will, of course, leave my hon. Friend plenty of time to respond. I know that he is always grateful for such thoughtfulness. To ensure that, I shall first make four main points so that we can concentrate on the four or five other points which may be fractionally more contentious.

First, I acknowledge that most of the medical consultants support the proposals. Anybody who has read the response to the consultation document will have the utmost regard to the comments by doctors Prior, Durkin and Uff and others which must be of concern to us all.

I also recognise that, for obvious reasons, acute provision units should, wherever possible, be on one site. I know of one particular circumstance in Gloucestershire when an elderly man was taken to Standish, suffered a heart attack and subsequently had to be taken on to Gloucestershire Royal hospital. There have been other such cases.

Thirdly, I understand that the choice between the existing Standish hospital and a new hospital is not, as some people suggested, cost cutting. If we are not to make use of the £10 million or so for capital improvements, someone else in another area will no doubt be very glad to do so.

Fourthly, we all recognise that Standish is not a community or a cottage hospital but is an acute services unit serving a large part of the county. When I visit the hospital, not least at Christmas, I meet a number of the patients there and they are just as likely to come from the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Mr. French) or from the Forest of Dean, represented so ably by my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland). There are patients from large areas of the county including my constituency.

As we are all in agreement up to this point, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will forgive me if, despite my introductory remarks, I come to the considerable level of public concern about the proposals for Standish hospital. The crux of the matter is that the general public like Standish hospital. They like it for its setting, its staff, its friendliness and its efficiency. If they have a hospital that they like and with which, in the main, they are satisfied, they want to be sure that the proposals will lead to further improvements.

Many local people and their relatives have been treated at the hospital over decades, perhaps more than one generation in some families. Most are satisfied and regard the hospital with considerable affection. The very active league of friends attests to that. I or anybody else could deposit an elderly relative at the hospital and drive away knowing that the patient would receive prompt and excellent treatment in a well-equipped and efficient unit.

Following conversations with my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary, I am grateful to him for the considerable interest that he has shown, particularly in view of his many and heavy responsibilities. He will substantially know the arguments advanced by the district health authority and the response by the community health council which has to represent the public interest and has done so well.

Having painted in the background to the matter, I wish to ask my hon. Friend a few questions which, if he cannot or will not answer tonight, I hope he will respond to later. First, I have already mentioned that the local population likes Standish. Many people can identify with a smallish unit in a rural setting, but few really like the large tower block hospitals in city centres which sometimes have parking problems.

In those circumstances, having heard the views in the consultation document of the professionals and consultants, does my hon. Friend agree that the views of the general public should also be taken into account? Does my hon. Friend agree that Standish is set in a particularly attractive rural location on an eminence overlooking the Severn valley with extensive grounds and, as one would expect from what was originally a TB hospital, a pure air? All that amounts to a considerable help to patients for their rapid recovery and recuperation.

How can one measure those benefits? Will my hon. Friend attempt to do so? That is the major point which convinced some 20,000 of my constituents, and perhaps a few beyond the boundary, under the guidance of the Save our Standish campaign, to sign a petition. I cannot say that I counted the 20,000 names, but I can confirm that that petition had no chance of fitting in the bag behind the Speaker's Chair. When we unrolled it, it broke several times and I am grateful to the House of Commons staff who deal with petitions for their forbearance for half an hour or more.

Although consultants back the proposals, not all GPs do. A local GP wrote to me as follows:

"I have been a general practitioner in Stroud for thirty-five years, during which time a great number of my patients have made use of the facilities at Standish Hospital, mostly as in patients, but, sometimes, by using the physiotherapy or hydrotherapy departments as out-patients . . . my strong impression is that Standish is highly valued because of its convenience for patients and visitors alike, its beautiful and morale boosting surroundings, the quality of its treatment, and the consistent kindness of all its staff, medical, nursing and ancillary. There have been very few complaints, if any. For local GPs, Standish has provided a much valued alternative for emergency admissions, of patients with acute respiratory disorders in particular, when other hospitals (Gloucester Royal and Stroud General) are reluctant to admit because of pressure on beds. We have been told that major surgery should not continue at Standish, because the lack of intensive care facilities makes it hazardous. It is difficult to comprehend why this should become a consideration now,

[Mr. Roger Knapman]

after forty years of successful orthopaedic surgery. In summary, my strong impression is that Standish Hospital is highly valued by patients, their relatives, and general practitioners locally, and that its services would be greatly missed if it was closed."

I am not suggesting that all GPs think like that, but a number of GPs—and a huge section of the general public—have written in similar terms. I hope my hon. Friend will confirm that their views will be taken into account.

Will my hon. Friend give careful consideration to the community health council's report, particularly the recommendations in paragraph 3.2, under the heading "Capital Savings"? The CHC concludes:

"More consideration should be given to the Health Authority's forecast of £9·5m to transfer services, when the cost to retain services at Standish"

would be only £4·8 million.

"The potential saving, on interest and capital charges, could be usefully employed in the provision of services with a higher priority."

What consideration has been given to that point? If some £4·8 million would indeed provide a first-class hospital on the existing site at Standish, would that be a suitable alternative to the present proposals? I hope that my hon. Friend will consider that carefully before any final decision is made.

I have already paid tribute to the professionalism and dedication of the hospital's staff. Will a substantial proportion of those staff—who, over the past few years, have been welded into a very successful team—be prepared to travel to the Gloucestershire Royal and work in the new unit? Can my hon. Friend confirm that all the facilities currently at Standish will be provided at the Gloucestershire Royal extension? If not, what aspects of provision will not be available? Has full agreement been reached with the consultants with regard to those facilities?

That is quite a list of questions, and I promised my hon. Friend plenty of time to reply to them. I assure him that these matters are considered to be very serious in Gloucestershire: indeed, on occasion they are considered matters of life and death. I am sure that my hon. Friend will provide for a thorough and exhaustive inquiry. I shall support him fully, because I know that he will decide the issue on medical rather than political grounds.

10.54 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) on having secured this debate on the proposed transfer of services from Standish hospital to the Gloucestershire Royal hospital. My hon. Friend presented his case with his typical skill and demonstrated his care for his constituents' interests.

I shall set out briefly the current position on the proposal to transfer services. As my hon. Friend knows, a major review of services at Standish hospital was undertaken in 1987 by the former Gloucester health authority, in conjunction with clinicians, professionals and representatives from the Cheltenham district health authority. At that time, there were also recommendations from the Royal College of Physicians. The review recommended the reprovision of acute services at Gloucestershire Royal hospital and the subsequent closure of Standish.

My hon. Friend will know about the approval of that recommendation by the health authority and the objection of the community health council. It was passed to the regional health authority and is now in the hands of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for a decision. I assure my hon. Friend that my right hon. Friend will take full account of all the comments that she receives on the proposal before making a decision.

I am aware that Standish is a small and friendly hospital, located in an attractive setting. I am also aware—my hon. Friend mentioned this—of the activities of the league of friends which raises funds for the hospital, together with 60 or more local volunteers who provide the trolley shop and other assistance at the hospital. For all those reasons, I am sure that no health authority will take a decision lightly about a much-loved hospital.

I understand that the overriding reasons for the proposal are based on medical recommendations, some of which were mentioned by my hon. Friend. Standish has, as has been said, 120 acute beds, including orthopaedics, chest medicine and rheumatology. It has no intensive care facilities. In the event of an emergency, the patient must endure a difficult and possibly dangerous transfer to the intensive therapy unit at Gloucestershire Royal. Also, Standish is too small to have its own specialists in all the various branches of acute medicine. That requires the transfer of acutely ill patients at times to the Gloucestershire Royal. I understand that, on average, one patient a day is transferred for other services.

Another key medical reason for reproviding the current services on a site with intensive care facilities is that a much wider range of patients than is at present allowed could benefit from major joint replacements. Those patients would be those who need pre-operative intensive care stabilisation of chronic conditions followed by post-operative intensive care monitoring. The point about intensive care is particularly apt in the case of an elderly and aging population who may require a higher level of high-tech back up.

Another medical reason is that there are no medical consultants based at Standish. Therefore, they are required to visit regularly once, twice or more each week. That results in a loss of considerable and valuable time in travelling between the two sites, which is unsatisfactory.

The royal college has withdrawn and will continue to withdraw recognition for training in anaesthesia from any district hospital that allows unsupervised trainees to anaesthetise patients. In that context, "unsupervised" means any time that a consultant or senior registrar is not present in the hospital. Standish is provided with a consultant in anaesthesia for nine of its current allocation of 14 substantive sessions. When a consultant is away on leave, the replacement must be one of senior registrar or equivalent status. That is not always possible from the small department at Gloucestershire Royal hospital, where there is only one senior registrar and where a registrar with the fellowship diploma is a rarity.

An additional problem that the limited pool of medical staff at Standish makes adequate 24-hour cover difficult without requiring junior doctors to work in excess of the 63-hour maximum week. Transferring services to the Gloucestershire Royal hospital would allow the new standards for junior doctors to be met as well as providing on-site support from senior medical staff.

There can be no disagreement about the fact that Standish hospital is set in idyllic surroundings. I take my

hon. Friend's point about the effect that such surroundings may have on patients, although it is, of course, impossible to measure the therapeutic effect. I must add that the question of hospital design, quite apart from architecture, is a matter of considerable concern to me and, I hope, will continue to be so to the health service. However, having said that, it must be admitted that Standish hospital is, I think, five miles from Stroud and 10 miles from Gloucester. That has some ramifications for accessibility, especially for a general hospital which attracts customers —patients—from a very wide area.

On the question of buildings and capital investment, the 1987 review, to which I have already referred, highlighted the poor condition of many of the buildings at Standish hospital, some of which date back to the early part of the previous century. One ward was in such a poor condition that it had to be replaced. The condition of the remaining estate is such that large sums of money would have to be spent to maintain the building if services remained there for very much longer.

I very much appreciate what my hon. Friend said about the level of public concern. Standish hospital is clearly much loved, and there is considerable local feeling about it. If I were given the choice, I should want to be treated in a small hospital in attractive, rural surroundings. However, that is an ideal, and one which unfortunately cannot always be met in the real world.

My hon. Friend mentioned clinicians. There is widespread agreement among consultants about the proposals, although many local general practitioners, who would like to continue to send their patients to Standish hospital, may have a different view.

It is not merely a question of spending a certain sum of money on Standish hospital. To keep some acute services on a relatively isolated site is not desirable or cost effective, and that is all that could be achieved as a result of minor reprovision at Standish. Services at Standish would, in the longer term, need the full support of a district general hospital. As I said, there are a number of difficulties in providing the 24-hour medical cover at Standish. It would be impractical and probably prohibitively expensive for the local health service as a whole to base staff at Standish to provide such a level of cover. I have already touched on the argument about untrained anaesthetists, and the impossibility of allowing them to be in sole charge of anaesthetised patients.

My hon. Friend also asked whether all the facilities now available at Standish could be provided at the Gloucestershire Royal. The answer to that question is definitely yes. I am assured that all patient services could be provided at that site, and at a higher technical and clinical standard.

As I have said, I appreciate the opportunity to make those points, especially as the matter is now before the Secretary of State for a decision. My right hon. Friend has yet to decide the future of the hospital, but I thought that it would be helpful to explain the thinking behind the district and regional health authorities' decision to put the proposals forward. I am fully aware of the strength of feeling about the hospital on the part of my hon. Friend and of local residents, and I reiterate that the Secretary of State will pay close attention to the views of all those involved, including the community health council and all other interested parties, before reaching any decision.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at five minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 16 June 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Resident Diplomats

1. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs if he will make a statement on the value of locally resident diplomatic representation.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): Our diplomatic representatives provide access and influence in order to further the United Kingdom's interests in the political, commercial, economic and other fields. They enhance the security and prosperity of this country and provide a wide-ranging service to British citizens abroad.

Mr. Arnold: Following the successful development of co-ordination between the Department of Trade and Industry and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in supporting British exporters, would not it be extremely unfortunate and counter-productive to reduce the number of our missions abroad, particularly when we are having to put such effort into increasing British exports?

Mr. Hurd: It is increasingly clear to those who follow these matters that diplomacy, the work that I have just described, and trade promotion are intertwined and that, in more and more of our markets, Governments set the rules and, in many cases, award the contracts, so orders are not obtained without knowing the politics and the politicians—and that is not achieved with a fax machine.

Mr. Hain: Does the Foreign Secretary agree that British businesses and expatriates in Nigeria need the protection of the Nigerian high commission under the excellent leadership of Sir Christopher MacRae? I hope that that praise will not prejudice Sir Christopher's career prospects. One of the commission's officials accompanied four Members of Parliament to observe the presidential elections on Saturday, the results of which I hope will be upheld as they were, by and large, free and fair.

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend—*[Interruption.]*—the hon. Gentleman. He was so polite that my tongue slipped. That exercise went well and I am glad that the high commission was able to give some help. Nigeria will remain a huge market. It illustrates the point that I have just made. During the past year, British exports have increased by 22 per cent. and I hope that a smooth movement back to civilian rule will help them, too.

Mr. Colvin: Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge that probably the most important diplomatic representatives that Britain has abroad at this difficult time in international affairs is our permanent representative at the United Nations? Will he take this opportunity to pay tribute to Sir David Hannay for the work that he does and confirm that it is extremely important that the United Kingdom retains its seat as a permanent member of the Security Council?

Mr. Hurd: That is our intention. Sir David Hannay sets a vigorous lead in all that he does at the United Nations.

Mr. Rogers: Is not the Secretary of State being a little economical with the facts in his answer? Is not it true that not only are the number of missions being cut but the Treasury has instructed the Foreign Office to cut the number of staff in embassies? In some important embassies —for instance, in north America—the number of staff dealing with trade and exports is being cut, while staff who deal with media and presentation are being retained. Is not that another example of the Government's policy of being all presentation and no substance?

Mr. Hurd: I have had no instructions from the Treasury in these matters. We are just entering discussions on the public expenditure round. We have had to open posts in many of the 20 new countries that have come into being in the past two or three years and that has meant retrenching in other places. This is a matter of setting priorities.

Mr. Wilkinson: I accept that it is necessary to have as comprehensive a representation around the world as possible, for the excellent growth reasons which were given by my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) and reinforced by my right hon. Friend's answer. Does not my right hon. Friend agree, however, that it is better to concentrate rather more on farther-flung places than on the EEC? In that context, will he reconsider the withdrawal of British defence attachées from Quito and Manila who play an important role in addition to the commercially and locally recruited personnel?

Mr. Hurd: Defence attachés are not a matter for me, but we do review the size of staff at bigger embassies. In the past few years, we have cut the size of staff by seven in Paris, six in Bonn and 17 in Washington. Diplomacy inside the Community is crucial. For example, our representatives in Community posts are currently preparing for the Copenhagen summit—warding off developments that we would not like and encouraging developments that we do like. That exercise is important for the summit's success.

East Timor

2. **Mr. Kilfoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he is taking to protect human rights in East Timor.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): Together with our European Community partners and bilaterally, we maintain a regular dialogue on human rights with the Indonesian authorities and raise particular issues—including East Timor—with them as necessary. European Community partners co-sponsored a resolution on East Timor at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva earlier this year.

Mr. Kilfoyle: Fine words, but since the invasion and occupation of East Timor in 1979, one in three of its population has died and Indonesia has been in breach of two Security Council resolutions and eight General Assembly resolutions. Is not it wholly unacceptable for the Foreign Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence to visit Indonesia and to give both political and material support to a regime whose record is on a par with that of Pol Pot in Cambodia?

Mr. Goodlad: Neither my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence nor my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has visited East Timor. Maintaining good relations with Indonesia, which is the chairman of the non-aligned movement and an important member of the Association of South-East Asian Nations, is much the best way of increasing its observance of human rights.

Mr. Nicholls: Whatever may have been Indonesia's human rights record over the years, it has improved a great deal—but instead of the regime being given credit for that, wildly exaggerated attacks are made by Opposition Members. Instead of indulging in the wild exaggeration that we have just heard from the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle), would not the interests of the people of Indonesia and of this country be better served if the regime were given credit for the real steps that it is taking to improve the situation?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend makes some extremely valid points. As I said, our best chance of helping to improve human rights in Indonesia and for many in East Timor is through the processes that we undertake.

Angola

3. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has held in the Foreign Affairs Council concerning Angola.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): Angola was discussed at the Development Council on 25 May.

Mr. Enright: I am sure that the Minister is well aware that more than 1 million Angolans have been displaced as a result of the war in that country and that the Angolan Government have bent over backwards to bring Dr. Savimbi into the Government, yet he continues to terrorise Angola in the way that the former Yugoslavia is being terrorised. Will the Minister, with all possible haste and urgency, stress on the Council the need for a course of immediate action to assist the Angolan Government—possibly involving the four other Lusophone countries?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I join the hon. Gentleman in condemning UNITA's action in rejecting the result of the election last September, which was judged by the United Nations special representative, Miss Margaret Anstee, as being generally free and fair. I give the hon. Gentleman an assurance that the European Council will discuss at next week's meeting in Copenhagen the problems of Angola, which are firmly on the agenda.

Mr. Grocott: Will the Minister be a little forthcoming? Since last year's elections, upwards of 20,000 people have been killed and—as my hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) said, more than 1 million have lost their homes. The situation in Angola poses a real threat to the international community as well as being a tragedy for Angola's people. Does the Minister acknowledge that UNITA is in breach of Security Council resolution 785, which clearly states that any party that fails to abide by the peace agreement will be rejected and isolated by the international community? What steps is he taking through the international community to ensure that UNITA is diplomatically and militarily isolated?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Clearly, the hon. Gentleman is right. We must all put pressure on UNITA, and this afternoon the House is providing the opportunity to do precisely that. The fact remains, however, that a resolution of the problems in Angola must involve a dialogue between UNITA and the Angolan Government. There is no other way in which peace can be brought to end the dreadful problem.

Exports Promotion

4. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how his Department contributes to promotion of British exports overseas.

Mr. Goodlad: The overseas trade services jointly provided by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department of Trade and Industry offer a comprehensive range of expert advice and support to British exporters through commercial sections in 196 posts world wide.

Mr. Thompson: Bearing in mind the Government's declared support for a major export drive, which must be sustained to ensure continuing recovery, and the apparent lack of interest shown in the subject by the Opposition —when only one of their members was able to attend a full-scale debate on the subject on 21 May—will my right hon. Friend assure the House that sufficient priority, expertise and resources will be given by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to posts overseas to meet the export challenge?

Mr. Goodlad: British exporters have told us unequivocally, and in public, that they value highly the commercial work which is undertaken by the diplomatic service and to which my hon. Friend alludes so graphically and accurately. That is, of course, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's largest single activity overseas. It is our aim to ensure that the service continues to have the resources necessary to enable heads of mission and their staff to maintain their commercially proactive role and to meet the demands made on them by exporters, directly and via the enhanced overseas trade services in this country.

Rev. Martin Smyth: How many embassies use their own property to entertain or to present exhibitions of British manufacturing and exporters' interests, as happened quite successfully a few years ago in Paris?

Mr. Goodlad: I think that practically all of them carry out those functions. The British embassy in Paris is using

its premises to launch the new Rover model this year. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that that is an extremely important use for our overseas estate.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Would my right hon. Friend be willing to carry out a special inquiry into the failure of his Department and other agencies to match exports to the European Community with imports? Will he bear it very much in mind that this month we have broken the barrier of the £1 billion deficit since our membership? Is not that a chronic failure which is doing great damage to the British economy and to jobs and prosperity?

Mr. Goodlad: The export services to which I referred have made an enormous contribution to ensuring that our exports to the European Community have been as healthy as they have.

Yugoslavia

5. **Mr. Hutton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the implementation of Security Council resolution 808 on a war crimes tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Hurd: United Nations Security Council resolution 827, which was adopted unanimously on 25 May, gave effect to the earlier decision in the resolution referred to in the question—808—to establish an international tribunal for former Yugoslavia. The latest resolution asks the Secretary-General to make practical arrangements for the effective functioning of the tribunal as soon as possible. We support that.

Mr. Hutton: What further practical measures will the Government take to support the work of the war crimes tribunal? In particular, might any person convicted of war crimes by the tribunal eventually be detained in British gaols? Will the right hon Gentleman also confirm that the jurisdiction of the war crimes tribunal will apply to everyone within the territories of the former Yugoslavia, including the military and civilian leaders of all the warring groups in that country?

Mr. Hurd: The answer to the last question is yes, and the answer to the second question about British prisons is that I do not believe that we are likely to make such an offer. However, we shall support the Secretary-General in establishing the three chambers of the tribunal and working out where they should sit, which I hope and think will be in The Hague. We shall also give him general support.

Mr. William Powell: I thank my right hon. Friend for the support that the British Government have given to resolution 827 and to the measures that preceded it, which have led to the establishment of the tribunal. Is he aware that the nature of the evidence that could be presented against any potential defendant is likely to be driven by witnesses rather than by a paper chase through the archives and that it is therefore essential for a special prosecutor to be established as quickly as possible, so that the evidence that could be presented to a court is not lost through further delay? Will my right hon. Friend support the Secretary-General if he chooses to accept the advice given to him by nearly every member of the United Nations and recommends Professor Cherif Bassiouni as the special prosecutor? My right hon. Friend will recall that I took Professor Bassiouni to see my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State at the Foreign Office a fortnight ago.

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his expert interest in the matter. I will pursue his point about the individual, and I agree that it is necessary to establish a special prosecutor as soon as possible. Meanwhile, as my hon. Friend certainly knows, there is already a commission of experts siting evidence, and that will continue at least until a special prosecutor is established.

Mr. Winnick: Does the Foreign Secretary accept that if, despite what he has told the House, those who have been responsible for the terrible crimes against humanity in former Yugoslavia are not brought to justice, that will encourage the continuation of such crimes and atrocities time and again? Does he also accept that the framework established at Nuremburg after the second world war is a good framework within which to try people held responsible for such crimes against humanity?

Mr. Hurd: We now have a new framework, and it is for the Secretary-General to fill in the details. That will not be easy for him, and the House should not underestimate the difficulties, but the reason for the exercise is that which the hon. Gentleman stated in the first part of his question.

Middle East

6. **Sir Ivan Lawrence:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in the search for a peace settlement in the middle east.

Mr. Hurd: Another round of bilateral negotiations between the parties is beginning in Washington this week. There were some encouraging signs at the end of the last round in May that the Israelis and Palestinians were beginning to discuss detail and substance. We continue to urge all parties to work for further progress.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Does my right hon. Friend not agree that the Arab states are holding up the search for peace by refusing to accede to his request at the Group of Seven conference in London that they stop the iniquitous Arab trade boycott? As the Government's attitude was that if there were a consensus for Community legislation, we should not oppose that and, as France, Holland and Germany have now initiated legislation against the boycott, will my right hon. Friend kindly consider taking more active steps to stop companies such as ICI cravenly obeying the boycott?

Mr. Hurd: I do not think that the experience of national legislation in other countries suggests that it has a powerful effect. It is largely declaratory and is difficult to enforce, so our course is the right one. Rather than legislating in this country, we seek to urge the Arabs to wind up the boycott. There has been some progress in the Gulf countries in that respect, as my hon. Friend knows —not enough progress, but the Kuwaitis, for example, have reportedly announced the abandonment of the application of the boycott to third countries. We will pursue the matter. The boycott is not the only obstacle to peace, but it is one.

Mr. Ernie Ross: I am sure that the Secretary of State would agree that the greatest obstacle to peace at the moment is the weight of the occupation on the Palestinian population now locked up in Gaza and the west bank as a result of decisions by the Israeli Government. It does not really help to talk about a trade boycott when the producers in Gaza and the west bank cannot sell what they produce in their factories or on their land. If the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) really wanted to help, he would urge that those barriers, and some of the other repressive measures currently "enjoyed" by—or rather, pressed on—the Palestinians, be lifted. That would be a significant boost to the peace talks.

Mr. Hurd: I sometimes think that it would be an excellent thing if people such as the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross), who favour the Palestinian cause, would occasionally condemn the boycott, and people such as my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton, who usually put questions from the other point of view, would urge the Israelis to do something to ease the burdens of the occupation. If the partisans—or rather, as that is a pejorative word, the advocates—of each cause occasionally used their influence and talents to urge better action on those whom they generally support, we might make more progress. Both those steps are needed.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that two of the barriers to peace in the middle east are the refusal of Arab states to recognise Israel and the refusal of the Arab captors to release Israeli hostages who have been held for many years, such as Ron Arad?

Mr. Hurd: That is another fair point, but it needs to be balanced by the handling of the deportee question by the Israeli Government. The Arab countries that are still technically at war with Israel are not far off negotiating a change, but I doubt whether they will conclude peace with Israel until there is a settlement between the Israelis and the Palestinians. That is the most difficult aspect of those negotiations, but it can be helped by confidence-building measures, such as an end to the Arab boycott and the easing of the conditions of occupation.

Dr. John Cunningham: The Foreign Secretary is right to urge people to play the role of forming a bridge in the difficult negotiations for peace in the middle east, Israel and the occupied territories. I certainly support him in that appeal. Since Britain has a somewhat peripheral role in those matters, may I urge the right hon. Gentleman to make it clear to the United States of America that it, too, should be evenhanded in the conduct of the current peace talks in Washington? Is not it rather depressing that the talks have recommenced on the basis of bilateral discussions rather than all the parties being around the table together? Has the right hon. Gentleman received any approaches from the Israeli Government or the Palestinians, either directly or through the European Community, for Europe to play a part in the economic reconstruction and rehabilitation of the occupied territories; if so, what response has been made? If the right hon. Gentleman has had such an approach, will he seek an initiative of that nature?

Mr. Hurd: We take a part, through the Community, in the multilateral side of the negotiations, which is precisely concerned with matters such as water and economic development.

On the right hon. Gentleman's first point, there have to be bilateral negotiations between Arab countries and Israel, between Palestine and Israel and so forth. We had a good run through the subject with the American Secretary of State in Luxembourg last week and I believe that the United States Administration are pressing ahead with the negotiations in the right way.

Mr. Clappison: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right in his insistence on the need for evenhandedness, but does he agree that evenhandedness has not been achieved under the Arab boycott, because at the 1991 conference the issue of the boycott was linked to the issue of Israel freezing settlements? Although Israel has made progress on that, substantial equivalent progress has not been made on the Arab side.

Mr. Hurd: There has been progress in ending settlements. My hon. Friend chose his word rightly—it is progress, not an end to the building of settlements, which are still going up in some places. We believe that that should be ended and the occupation eased. Equally, we shall continue to press hard for an ending of the Arab boycott.

Cuba

7. **Mr. Pickthall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about British relations with Cuba.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): Relations with Cuba are correct.

Mr. Pickthall: The Under-Secretary of State was good enough to give me an encouraging answer to a written question on the subject on 27 April, at column *363*, in which he said that the American boycott of trade with Cuba would not have any practical effect on British emergency aid to Cuba. Will the Government take that a step further? They will know that the combination of severe storms and the American blockade is causing severe distress in Cuba. They may not know that Cuban schools and colleges are pleading with Britain for books in English and for other educational aids. Will the Government use their good offices to pressurise the American Government to lift what the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) called an iniquitous trade boycott?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We gave some emergency aid to Cuba earlier this year following the storms and the delivery of that aid was not hindered in any practical way by the United States embargo. The Cuban economy is on the verge of ruin not because of the American embargo but because of 30 years of imposed state communism.

Mr. Oppenheim: My hon. Friend must accept that that is not good enough. The Government must strive to establish and maintain more open and fruitful relations with countries such as Cuba and North Korea, so that more people may be made aware of the glowing achievements of those remaining—although admittedly beleaguered—beacons of socialism and central planning. Would not that at least make more people aware that, although free market systems may not be perfect, they are a hell of a lot less imperfect than the central planning and socialism in countries such as Cuba?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My hon. Friend makes a fair point. Cuba provides a laboratory example of a socialist state gone wrong. We maintain diplomatic and trading links with Cuba, but our relations can improve only if the Cubans hold free and fair elections and respect human rights.

Western Sahara

8. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the UN concerning the preparations for a referendum on the future of Western Sahara.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We maintain regular contact with the United Nations Secretary-General through our permanent representative concerning the implementation of the UN settlement plan.

Mr. Corbyn: Is the Minister aware that, for a long time, the Sahrawi people have been denied the right to live peacefully on their own land? Methods employed by the Moroccan Government in attempting to impose an electorate in advance of a UN-sponsored referendum would guarantee an outcome favourable to King Hassan. Is not it time for this country and others to stand up in support of UN resolutions 658 and 690 to ensure that the Sahrawi people get a free and unfettered voice in a referendum and not one dominated by the Moroccan military? Failure to do so will lead to a reopening of hostilities, a terrible loss of life and a further blow to the prestige of the UN. Will the Government act to ensure that those people have a free voice?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We very much wish to see the referendum take place. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the UN Secretary-General has just visited Morocco and Western Sahara and we are awaiting his report which is expected in the next few weeks. We believe that he will address the resolution of some of the problems of representation in the referendum. I expect that the Government will be supporting the Secretary-General when we have read the terms of his report.

Sir David Steel: Does the Minister agree that there have at least been some tentative signs of compromise between the Polisario and the Moroccan Government? Should not we, as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, encourage that and, for that reason, will the Foreign Office lift the ban on Ministers meeting the Polisario? We were late to do so in the cases of the African National Congress and the Palestine Liberation Organisation—let us not be too late again.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The way forward is to support the Secretary-General. The Polisario and the Moroccan representative will be in Vienna during the world human rights conference and will be meeting the Secretary-General. Our best contact with the Polisario is in that way rather than by ministerial contact, because we shall be supporting the Secretary-General's recommendations.

Mr. Gill: Why are the Government in favour of a referendum in Africa but not in Great Britain?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My hon. Friend knows full well that the situation in the Western Sahara is compeletely different. It involves the resolution of an ancient problem in which we wish to see the representation of people who have no Parliament.

Kashmir

9. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had about the situation in Kashmir; and if he will make a statement.

13. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Indian Government on the present position in Kashmir; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs most recently discussed Kashmir with the Indian Vice-President on 25 May during his visit to London.

Mr. Canavan: More than 20,000 Kashmiris have been killed and thousands more imprisoned and tortured by Indian forces over the past three years. Will the Government use their influence, particularly through the Commonwealth and the United Nations, to try to get the Indian and Pakistani Governments to reach an agreement whereby more respect is given to the human rights of the people of Kashmir? That agreement could also give the Kashmiri people the right to self-determination, leading possibly to the establishment of an independent state of Kashmir if that is what the people want.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I can certainly agree that the resolution of that ancient and difficult problem must require dialogue between India and the Pakistan Government—that we urge. We wish to be as helpful as we can. We have certainly made it absolutely clear to the Indians that we are concerned about human rights. In fact, the Indians have initiated legislation to set up an independent human rights commission. But the way forward must be by dialogue between the two factions.

Mr. Cox: The Minister referred to a meeting. What was the response of the Indian Minister to allowing an all-party group of hon. Members to visit the occupied area of Kashmir? In view of the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Mr. Cunningham), will the Minister give an indication of what progress the Prime Minister is making? In a letter to me in April, he clearly indicated that he would welcome Kashmir being on the agenda of the Commonwealth Heads of Government conference in Cyprus later this year, because Pakistan and India would be at that conference.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As for visiting Kashmir, the hon. Gentleman must take up his case with the Indian high commissioner. For my part, I believe that it is helpful that there should be visits to that part of the world. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister raised the problems of Kashmir with the Indian Prime Minister in January and with the Indian Vice-President when he visited Britain in May. My right hon. Friend made his views quite clear on both occasions and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I do so as well.

Sir John Wheeler: My hon. Friend will know that there is great concern among hon. Members about human rights in Indian-held Kashmir. Will he confirm that the solution

to that long-standing problem must arise from negotiations between the two countries concerned, India and Pakistan, under the Simla agreement? Will he continue to bring to the attention of those countries, in particular India, our concern about human rights and the fact that the United Kingdom will be available to help both countries should they so wish such assistance?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Should both countries seek our support, we will always be willing and ready to give it. An important point that should be made when discussing the human rights problem in Kashmir is that the criticism that is expressed in the House is often mirrored—indeed initiated—by criticism in the Indian Parliament, from the Indian press and, of course, from Indian human rights organisations, all of which express their concern as well.

Mr. Waller: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Simla agreement which India and Pakistan signed involves a commitment to start talking about Kashmir, which unfortunately at present the Indian Government appear to be unwilling to commit themselves to doing? Will my hon. Friend use every opportunity to reiterate to the Indian Government that it is unreasonable to exclude from Jammu and Kashmir independent observers such as British Members of Parliament and representatives of Amnesty International and that, short of such acceptance of independent visitors, India's reputation for human rights must be subject to the deepest scrutiny?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My hon. Friend has expressed his opinion. Obviously, contact between the Indian Prime Minister and the Pakistan Prime Minister is highly desirable. They last met at the non-aligned summit in Dhaka in April this year and I hope that they will have future meetings.

Mr. Madden: Will the Minister press the Indian Government to publish the names of the 52,000 people held in India, including Kashmir, without trial? Will he also advise his counterparts at the Home Office that, in view of India's appalling human rights record and the numbers held in detention without trial, now is not the time to invite the British House of Commons to pass orders approving the extradition treaty between Britain and India?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that we should not have proper arrangements for the extradition of terrorist offenders. There will be the usual safeguards in the extradition treaty provisions which are presented to the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The person in question will have to be brought before Bow Street magistrates court. The court must be satisfied that he will not be prejudiced because of his political opinions. The Home Secretary makes the final decision, which is subject to judicial review. Therefore, there is a great deal of protection for anyone who is brought into the proceedings.

Bosnia

10. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with Mr. Slobodan Milosevic regarding Bosnia.

Mr. Hurd: I have had no discussion with President Milosevic on Bosnia since the London conference in August 1992. However, we ensure that he is kept fully abreast of our views.

Lady Olga Maitland: Will my right hon. Friend join me in condemning the vicious and brutal attack ordered by Mr. Milosevic on the Serbian opposition leader, Mr. Vuk Draskovic, during the anti-Government demonstrations in Belgrade? Is he aware that there is serious concern about the health of Mr. Draskovic, who is now in prison? He has suffered a broken jaw and a broken arm and has serious head injuries and he can neither walk nor speak. I urge my right hon. Friend to seek his immediate release. Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is another example of the loathsome character of Mr. Milosevic, who seeks to promote ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, and another example of a fascist dictator?

Mr. Hurd: The Prime Minister, responding to the sort of anxiety expressed by my hon. Friend, sent a strong message to President Milosevic impressing on him the need for the release of Mr. Draskovic and his wife and for them to be given full access to visitors and medical treatment in the meantime. My hon. Friend is right—this is a cruel step backwards in the wrong direction so far as Serbia is concerned.

Mr. Faulds: In any future conversations with this leading war criminal Milosevic, what will the right hon. Gentleman suggest as to the practicality of the restoration of the territorial integrity of Bosnia, which has clearly been abandoned in the Washington agreement to which he shamefully put his name and that of this country?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman cannot have read the agreement as it specifically refers to the need for Serb withdrawal from the territories that they have seized.

Sir Anthony Durant: In view of the increasingly dangerous situation in Bosnia, will my right hon. Friend ensure that British troops are withdrawn if circumstances become so impossible that they are unable to carry on with their humanitarian aid?

Mr. Hurd: Yes. At the moment, our troops, as well as French, Spanish and other troops in different parts of Bosnia, are helping to keep people alive in two ways: by escorting convoys which continue to deliver supplies and, by their presence, averting the sort of massacre that would probably follow if they were withdrawn. So long as that is true and there is no undue risk to them, they should stay. But my hon. Friend is right—if the situation deteriorated further to the point at which we and others felt that the risk had become undue, they would have to be withdrawn. The steps that the Ministry of Defence announced last week to the House were formulated in that context.

Dr. John Cunningham: Is not the Washington agreement on Bosnia deeply flawed? Did not it give, intentionally or otherwise, a clear signal to the Serbs that their aggression would be rewarded with extra territory? Has not President Milosevic been emboldened by continuing weakness on the part of the European Community and did not that result in the imprisonment and torture of Mr. Draskovic and his wife Danica? Is not it time for the European Community and our other allies to say once and for all that we will take whatever action is

required to ensure that the decisions of the Security Council of the United Nations and the Community are upheld in Bosnia?

Mr. Hurd: The advice "Something must be done" is the least useful that can be given in these circumstances. The right hon. Gentleman paraphrased that advice and made it a bit longer, but that is really what he said. The hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) alleged that the Washington statement accepted Serb aggression. I pointed out that that was not so. The pressures for reversing that aggression are political, economic and financial. Those who believe that it would be right to send our troops and other troops to enforce a military solution should say so, not take refuge in the sort of rhetoric which is an obstacle to reality.

NATO Information Budget

11. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current United Kingdom contribution to the NATO information budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The information budget of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation for this year amounts to about £4 million, of which the United Kingdom contributes 18 per cent.—currently about £750,000.

Mr. Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is clear that, despite the ending of the cold war, NATO has a continuing, perhaps increasing, role? What is being done to explain that role more widely?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I agree that NATO is a successful collective security pact and we shall not throw it away in what is still a dangerous world. Its role is changing following the end of the cold war. It is developing a new role and it is important that it should explain that role to the public, not just in this country, but in the former Warsaw pact countries, which are keen that the stability that we have enjoyed in western Europe under NATO should be extended to them.

Mr. Cryer: Was not NATO established because of an alleged threat from the east, led by the Soviet Union? Now that that threat has disappeared, even among Tory imaginations, is not it time that we abandoned the massive expenditure on NATO and worked towards its break-up to equate with the ending of the Warsaw pact? Surely that would be a step towards peace. To maintain NATO on the ridiculous presumption that there is some danger somewhere is a waste of money and the maintenance of a useless and outdated empire.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: That threat to western Europe was real, even if the dinosaurs on the Labour Benches never recognised it. As I said in my first response, NATO's role is changing and there are opportunities for NATO troops to help with peacekeeping operations. We have seen NATO planes enforcing the no-fly zone in Bosnia. Just because the cold war has ended does not mean that NATO's role is less important.

Subsidiarity

12. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to consider legislation passed since 1986 for possible amendment or repeal on the grounds of subsidiarity and unsuitability for the United Kingdom, after the Brussels European Council of December 1993.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We are discussing with the Commission and member states action to ensure that subsidiarity is made to work in practice and that legislation is amended or repealed where necessary. The Commission has been instructed to present the outcome of its review on the subject at Brussels in December.

Mr. Fabricant: Will my hon. Friend undertake to double and redouble his efforts to apply subsidiarity not only prospectively but retrospectively after the Brussels summit? If he finds difficulty in applying the principle retrospectively because there is no mechanism to do so, will my hon. Friend work with his European colleagues to try to find such a mechanism?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: As a matter of law, the subsidiarity clause in the Maastricht treaty is not retrospective—the House respects that principle in its own legislation. But the Edinburgh Council agreed that the Commission should examine existing legislation with a view to amending or repealing it if it conflicted with the principle of subsidiarity or minimum interference, as it should perhaps be called. As a Government, we are looking at the European statute book with the same end in mind.

Mr. Barnes: If the Government like what the European Community is doing they say that it is in line with the principle of subsidiarity. If they dislike what is being done they claim that it contravenes the principle of subsidiarity and that matters should be determined at national level. Therefore, the principle means anything that anybody wants it to. Would not it be better to have greater control over the activities of the Council of Ministers, which is supposed to decide whether subsidiary operates? It would help the House if the voting records of the Council of Ministers were systematically printed in *Hansard* when reports are made of Council meetings. In response to me, the Prime Minister said that that would be done, but it is not being done. Can we ensure that all Departments act on that issue in future? In fact, there are never any votes taken in Council meetings because, even when matters are to be decided by qualified majority voting, they are always passed on the nod.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The principle of subsidiarity applies to all the institutions of the EC—not just to the Commission and the Parliament, but to the Council of Ministers. Under Maastricht, it will be a legally binding principle, ultimately enforceable at law. But in order to make it a binding principle we first need to ratify the treaty. I should be grateful if the hon. Gentleman would assist us with that process.

Mr. Dykes: Is my hon. Friend aware that we welcome his cautious approach as outlined in response to the original question? As the 1986 legislation was mostly to do with the implementation of the single market, based on majority voting, and pursued for the most part by this Government, the question of subsidiarity did not arise as much as people might now think. Does he agree that the amount of legislation coming from the Commission is in any case much less than hitherto?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Even before the treaty has been ratified the Commission is respecting the principle of subsidiarity. That has led to a noticeable reduction in the number of instruments that it proposes. But we are also anxious to look back at existing legislation because, despite what my hon. Friend says, there have been some breaches of the principle in that legislation and we wish to amend or appeal it as appropriate.

Mr. George Robertson: May I take this opportunity of welcoming the new Minister to the Dispatch Box? He is the 24th Foreign Office Minister whom I have sat opposite, so I advise him not to get too comfortable or he will go the same way as the rest of them did.

Does not the distinct smell of deceit and hypocrisy come from the Government when they talk about subsidiarity, openness and transparency? What they champion is usually the precise opposite of what they practise. For instance, why, last week, did the new Minister go along with the deliberate decision by the Council of Ministers not to publish voting figures for Council meetings? That was not only in breach of what my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) was told in a parliamentary answer, but in direct breach of what the Danish people were told. This new Minister actually proposed that the European ombudsman should not have access to correspondence between the Council of Ministers and the European Commission, thereby undermining the principle of openness.

Is not it a fact that the Minister, who was the Deputy Chief Whip, is taking into Europe the same old bad habits of that secret society, the Tory Whips Office, when what the people of Europe want is an open, accountable Community?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind welcome. I was indeed privileged to be in the Whips Office for the past year, where I tried to rescue the Maastricht treaty from the political manoeuvrings of the hon. Gentleman—culminating in that heroic abstention on Third Reading.

I entirely reject the idea that the Government take the view that proceedings should be anything less than open and helpful. The hon. Gentleman entirely misunderstands what happened last week in Luxembourg. We said, and we received support from all other member states, that the powers of the future European ombudsman should, in this respect, be the same as those of our own ombudsman—powers which work well in respect of access to secret and confidential documents.

It was a matter of great regret that the European Parliament used that excuse not to agree to extend the subsidiarity principle to its own proceedings.

Macedonia

14. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations between the United Kingdom and the republic of Macedonia.

Mr. Hurd: We gave full support to the admission of the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia to the United Nations on 8 April, thereby implicitly recognising the country as an independent foreign state. We now have a British presence in Skopje. I visited the country on 4 June and held talks with President Gligorov and acting Foreign Minister Crvenkovski.

Mr. Lidington: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. Will he join me in welcoming the reported decision by the United States to deploy American troops on the frontiers between Macedonia and her neighbours to try to prevent border incursions? Does he agree that it might be a good idea if one or two European countries that have declined to contribute their troops to the humanitarian effort in Bosnia and have instead chosen to carp from the sidelines considered following that American example?

Mr. Hurd: The Americans were following the European example in this respect. A Nordic battalion—Swedes, Norwegians and, I think, Finns and Danes—is already established in Macedonia. I hope that the mandates of both the Scandinavians and the Americans now joining can be interpreted or enlarged in such a way that they will be able to help the Macedonians to enforce sanctions. There is no doubt that the main breach of sanctions is now taking place through Macedonia. For the reasons that have already been discussed, it is extremely important that the economic and financial pressures on Serbia should be made effective.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Foreign Secretary, in his discussions with all the people concerned with these matters, remind them that they had better not take a blind bit of notice of what the Liberal Democrats and their leader say on the subject? Three months ago the leader of the Liberal Democrats wanted to bomb the hell out of Serbia and to send in more troops, yet, to a thin House last Friday morning, he said that the troops should be pulled out.

Mr. Hurd: I have read in *Hansard* the hon. Gentleman's remarks about what the leader of the Liberal Democratic party said last Friday and I agree with them. Will he please continue to monitor the right hon. Gentleman?

Mr. Churchill: While we must all hope that the bloodshed in Bosnia will not spill over into Macedonia, may I ask my right hon. Friend whether Her Majesty's Government will ensure that we do not see in Macedonia a repetition of the declaration of safe havens which has been so disastrous in the case of Bosnia, where there was no evident United Nations determination to deploy forces to make areas safe? Have not these safe havens been just a cruel deception, which has undermined the authority of the United Nations?

Mr. Hurd: Safe havens are an attempt to save people's lives. We started with humanitarian convoys. Then we moved on, despite considerable scepticism. Some European countries provided troops to escort the convoys and enable them to get through. We are seeking to move to the stage of making places safe, but that depends on a Security Council resolution—there is such a resolution—on a degree of local agreement and on the provision of more troops. What is necessary cannot be done without more troops. We are doing our bit, as are the French. Success relies on more countries coming forward in response to the Secretary-General's appeal and some countries are coming forward. Some Scandinavian countries are responding and the Secretary-General is now putting the list together. The greater the number of troops

that can be brought in, the safer the areas will become and the more likely it will be that some reality will emerge from the rhetoric of which my hon. Friend complains.

Mr. Connarty: Does the Secretary of State realise how ironic it is that he should be talking about Macedonia in the same terms as about Bosnia? We recognise Bosnia. Is not everyone worried that when Croatia and Serbia have carved up Bosnia, they will turn to other targets? The shame that we shall have to wade through will be similar to what we have done in Bosnia and what is happening in Croatia. In fact, we may find ourselves throwing paper at the antagonists, as the right hon. Gentleman says has been done in the case of the Washington agreement. We should be talking about putting together a peace-making force to guarantee Macedonia's boarders. At the moment, all that we have is a few troops from a few countries.

Mr. Hurd: The position in Macedonia is different. The hon. Gentleman will agree that the great majority—about 90 per cent.—of those fighting in Bosnia are Bosnians. They are helped and encouraged from outside, particularly from Serbia. There is no substantial Serb minority in Macedonia.

However, the hon. Gentleman is the only one I have heard who is in favour of sending a military expedition into Bosnia to impose a solution. I respect the honesty of his views, although I do not share them.

Hong Kong

15. **Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to visit Hong Kong to discuss Sino-British relations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has at present no plans to do so, but I visited Hong Kong from 29 May to 1 June. Talks are continuing between Britain and China on electoral arrangements in Hong Kong. We are working for an early and successful conclusion in time for us to hold elections in Hong Kong in 1994 and 1995 which are fair, open and acceptable to the people of Hong Kong.

Mr. Waterson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that pushing ahead with the new airport in Hong Kong is crucial to maintaining confidence for the future there, especially among the commercial community? Can he give some hope of progress in the relatively near future in the discussions with the Chinese authorities about the financing arrangements for that airport?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend is correct: everybody agrees that Hong Kong needs a new airport if it is to remain an international trade and financial centre. We have done our best to take account of Chinese problems with financing arrangements and further discussions on those arrangements are taking place. I hope that they will lead to an agreement. Our view remains that if the problems were dealt with on their merits they could be quickly solved and that would certainly be a great boost to confidence. In the meantime, we are maintaining momentum on the airport to avoid expensive cost increases and slippages.

Ms Hoey: Does the Minister envisage any circumstances in which the Government might renege on the 1997 agreement to withdraw from Hong Kong?

Mr. Goodlad: No.

Points of Order

3.30 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. A few weeks ago, during the debate on the White Paper about the coal industry, you along with the rest of us heard the President of the Board of Trade and others speak about saving so many pits. We wanted to save all 31, and the Minister said that they would save a few. The news has now reached us that one of the pits that the President of the Board of Trade said would be saved, not shut—Rufford, in the east midlands—is due for closure this weekend.

Have you, Madam Speaker, at any time received from the President of the Board of Trade an application to make a statement to the House so that we can ensure we have not been hoodwinked by the President—because it looks very much like it?

Madam Speaker: If any Minister had sought to make a statement today, it would have appeared on the Annunciator and we would all know about it.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. It arises from my request to you earlier today for a private notice question——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should understand that once I have made a decision he cannot raise the issue with me.

Mr. Wilshire: I was about to say that I am not seeking to challenge that.

Madam Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Gentleman raising a point of order for me?

Mr. Wilshire: I am, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: In that case I must hear it.

Mr. Wilshire: I seek your advice and help in protecting the interests of my constituents, and I do so as a result of a matter that I discovered subsequent to my request to you this morning.

I now realise that on 9 June the Department of Transport published air accident report No. 3/93, briefed the press upon it and gave copies to the press. The report reveals matters of grave importance to my constituents. It shows that a pilot suffered structural damage to his aircraft but failed to declare an emergency although there was one. He asked leave to land at Heathrow airport, in my constituency, but was asked to go to Stansted. He assumed that that request was made because he would overfly——

Madam Speaker: Order. I cannot interest myself in the argument. The hon. Gentleman must put a clear point of order. Does the matter affect our Standing Orders or procedures?

Mr. Wilshire: Yes, it does, Madam Deputy Speaker, but in order to show you why——

Madam Speaker: Order. I am being demoted.

Mr. Wilshire: I apologise, Madam Speaker. As you will appreciate, I do not often raise points of order, so I hope that you will allow a minimum amount of latitude.

The facts that I have given are essential to an understanding that my constituents, who suffered from the crash at Staines, are desperately worried.

I am able to tell you all this, Madam Speaker, only because of the media. I made inquiries and discovered that no local Member of Parliament was told by the Department of Transport and that no copy of the report has been deposited in the House. Is this something that you can look into to ensure that such matters are reported to the House?

Madam Speaker: It is a matter for the hon. Gentleman himself. As he knows, there are various procedures by which he can seek the information that he requires. He can seek to ask questions or apply for an Adjournment debate. Perhaps on reflection he will explore one of those avenues with a view to obtaining the information that he wants.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Have you had a request from the Home Secretary to come to the House to make a statement about his announcement, which most Conservative Members welcome, to the media concerning the introduction of the expandable side-handled police baton?

Madam Speaker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave a few moments ago.

BILL PRESENTED

Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) (Northern Ireland)

Mr. Alfred Morris, supported by Mr. James Molyneaux, Rev. Martin Smyth, Sir James Kilfedder, Dr. Joe Hendron, Rev. Ian Paisley, Mr. William Ross, Mr. Ken Maginnis, Mr. Eddie McGrady, Rev. William McCrea, Mr. Roy Beggs and Mr. Clifford Forsythe, presented a Bill to prohibit, in Northern Ireland, discrimination against disabled people on the ground of their disability; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time,; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 2 July 1993, and to be printed. [Bill 210.]

Funding of Political Parties

3.34 pm

Mr. John Spellar (Warley, West): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to regulate the funding of political parties, and for connected purposes.

Let me make it clear that it is not about state funding for political parties; it is principally about regulating outside donations.

The Bill has three main aims: first, to prohibit donations by foreign nationals not normally resident in this country, and by overseas companies and overseas Governments; secondly, to ensure the recording and publication of donations above a certain limit, probably about £1,000; thirdly, to require political parties to publish income and expenditure accounts, in the same way as companies and trade unions do.

I am sure that such measures would be welcomed, not only by the Opposition but by many Conservatives, particularly those who support the Charter movement and who are demanding openness in their own party. I hope that the chairman of the Conservative party will be able to enlighten the Home Affairs Committee about many of these matters later today.

The House passed a resolution as far back as December 1949 that

"political parties, and all other organisations having political action as one of their aims, should publish annually full and adequate statements of their accounts."

Perhaps 40 years is enough time for even the Tory party to catch up.

Why is party funding, particularly funding of the Conservative party, such a relevant issue today? After all, the brewers have been involved in Tory politics for centuries; even today their influence is fairly substantial. Various shadowy organisations, such as British United Industrialists, have been funnelling money into Tory coffers for years. It is nearly 50 years since the so-called River companies were set up as a secret conduit for funds for the Tory party which it wanted to keep hidden from public gaze.

It has also been clear for many years, to put it delicately, that there has been a strong statistical link between donations from companies and the chances of their bosses getting knighthoods and peerages. I am sure that that is a matter of coincidence. It has also been a long-running scandal that the Conservative party does not publish proper accounts, even for its own members.

Recent events—particularly the case of Mr. Asil Nadir—have made this a major and burning public issue. We are talking about some very big money. Donations to the central Tory party came to an estimated £7·5 million in 1989, £7·9 million in 1990, £15·8 million in 1991, and a whopping £20·7 million in 1992. Donations from constituency associations and published donations in company accounts came to only a small percentage of this. So where is the rest coming from? It has become increasingly clear that it comes from extremely wealthy individuals, both at home and abroad.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Such as Asil Nadir?

Mr. Spellar: I am not sure whether Asil Nadir should be regarded as a domestic or overseas donor in this context. We have an estimate of his donation, admitted by the Tory party, of £400,000. The press has reported figures ranging up to £1·5 million. It has also been reported that moneys were being accepted from him when it was clear that his business was in a shaky state. We do not know whether the money came out of his own pocket or from his company without even being legally reported. I am sure that his creditors will be most interested in knowing that. We hope that the chairman of the Conservative party will shed some light on the matter.

British pension funds—and that means, in real terms, ordinary British pensioners—lost some £2 billion when Polly Peck crashed. We know that Asil Nadir received considerable support. What the public want to know about Asil Nadir and others is, what did they pay and what did they get for it? We know what Asil Nadir got. He did not get his knighthood, but he got seven Tory Members of Parliament, including Ministers, to press his case.

What did the others get and what did they pay? What of some of the other dubious donors whose names have been linked with Tory funding?

Mr. David Evans (Welwyn Hatfield): What about Robert Maxwell?

Mr. Spellar: I am very pleased to hear that the Bill has all-party support. It shows that there is a great demand for it and it is extremely helpful to know that it is widely supported, even from such a dubious source.

What about Mr. Gerald Ronson, who was briefly a guest of Her Majesty's Government, who is alleged to have made donations through companies, possibly in the Virgin Islands? Jack Lyons was convicted of fraud and stripped of his knighthood and Nazmu Virani is now facing fraud charges regarding false loans from BCCI.

It is said that one of the benefits to donors was a tax break for foreign business men who are given tax exemptions equalled only in Switzerland, the Channel Islands and Luxembourg. How much is that costing the taxpayer? Is it not ironic that, when the Secretary of State for Social Security, the mad axeman of the Government, is prepared to savage the welfare state, the Government are forgoing substantial tax income from people who already have more money than they need? It is even reported that the Prime Minister hosted a fund-raising dinner for some of them.

One alleged beneficiary is John Latsis, who was extremely friendly with the Greek colonels. Another is Mr. Li Ka Shing, a Hong Kong billionaire who is well connected in Beijing. He is alleged to have given about half a million pounds.

It is ironic that the Tories made so much fuss about money going from Moscow to the Communist party. It seems that Communist-connected money is acceptable from Beijing but not from Moscow. It is also said that the Prime Minister dropped off for a special dinner in Hong Kong. We want to know the facts, and so do the public.

Why should overseas plutocrats take such an interest in our affairs to the tune of an estimated £7 million in 1991-92 alone? It is not just a question of foreign business men; it is believed that foreign Governments are also involved. The Governments of Brunei, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia have all been mentioned in articles. Is the British Government's foreign policy up for sale? What is the truth and how many others are there? The public have a right to know.

[Mr. Spellar]

The United States have sensibly banned foreign donations and we should follow that example. It is an outrage that the Tory party should be wrapped up in such secrecy and be dependent on excessively large donations or loans from those who are not prepared to be publicly identified.

More than 100 years ago, in 1883, Lord Randolph Churchill told the Tory party conference in Birmingham:

"When you allow secret expenditure, you will certainly have corrupt expenditure."

It is equally absurd that the Government are not prepared to provide proper accounts showing where the money goes and the level of their debts. It is only when we get a revelation like the spending on the legal bill of the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont) that the facts come out. The response of the Tory donors was drastic: half a million pounds was the estimate from the current vice-chairman of the Tory party.

Perhaps that is why the Government are so reticent, but, as Professor Keith Ewing said in evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee,

"Those who have nothing to hide have nothing to fear".

The Select Committee may come up with other measures. All I am hoping to do is to enable light to be shed on the dark and sleazy world of Tory political finance which has been hidden from the public gaze for too long.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. John Spellar, Mrs. Barbara Roche, Mr. Mike O'Brien, Mr. David Winnick, Ms Angela Eagle, Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours, Mr. Andrew Mackinlay and Mr. Gordon McMaster.

FUNDING OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Mr. John Spellar accordingly presented a Bill to regulate the funding of political parties: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 2 July, and to be printed. [Bill 211.]

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will have noticed that my hon. Friend's ten-minute Bill had overwhelming and unanimous support from the House; there was no opposition to it. One or two Conservative Members made noises, which is all that some of them seem capable of doing, but no voices were raised in objection to the Bill. It clearly has the unanimous support of the House, and I am sure that it has strong support in the country.

May I have your advice, please, Madam Speaker? Given the unanimous support for the Bill, are there any swift procedures whereby it can be enacted? It is clearly what the House wants and what the country needs.

Madam Speaker: There is no easy way to success in this House. I am afraid that it is uphill all the way.

Orders of the Day

Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill

Lords amendments further considered.
Lords amendments Nos. 9 to 23 agreed to.

Clause 22

RIGHT TO MATERNITY LEAVE AND RIGHT TO RETURN TO WORK

Lords amendment: No. 24, in page 40, leave out lines 40 to 44.

3.45 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. Michael Forsyth): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to consider Lords amendments Nos. 25 and 26.

Mr. Forsyth: The amendments fulfil an undertaking given by my noble Friend Viscount Ullswater to Lord Mottistone in Committee in another place. Lord Mottistone had raised a particular concern of employers about a woman who comes back from maternity leave early, without telling her employer of her intentions. Employers have pointed out that if they are unable to plan for that eventuality, the person whom they have taken on to replace the employee during her maternity leave will still be in post. The employer will be liable to give the replacement at least a week's notice and will end up having to pay for two people to do one job—the woman and her replacement.

I do not expect that such a situation will arise often. Most women will probably choose to take their full 14 weeks' statutory entitlement and those who do not will, in the main, be in touch with their employer anyway and will want to let him or her know their date of return so that preparations can be made for it. Only a very small minority of employees are likely to behave otherwise. However, the Government agree with employers that it would not be reasonable for them to be put to trouble and expense by such thoughtless behaviour.

The main amendment therefore provides that, in the rare case where a woman seeks to arrive back at work early without giving her employer a week's warning, he or she will be able to send her away again to continue her maternity leave until the seven days have expired—or until the end of the statutory period of leave, if that is earlier. That will enable the temporary replacement to be given the proper week's notice to which he or she is entitled, at the end of which the woman on maternity leave can return to work.

The other amendments in the group are mainly consequential and ensure that employees are able to choose whichever is the more favourable of their contractual or statutory rights in any particular aspect. The provisions ensure that the position is equivalent—in respect of the new right to maternity leave—to the current situation regarding maternity absence.

I commend the amendments to the House.

Ms Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): I have listened carefully to the Minister. We are disappointed that the maternity provisions of the Bill have come back largely unchanged from the other place and that we shall consider only this rather modest amendment. We are therefore left with a highly unsatisfactory package of measures covering pregnant women at work and women who wish to return to work after having a baby. It is a pity that the new intake at the Department of Employment has not been prepared, even at this late stage, to take a fresh, positive look at the maternity provisions in the Bill.

The new Secretary of State is in his place. His reputation was referred to yesterday. He is also reputed to be a pro-European. It seems a great shame that, the day after being appointed to his new post, he should find himself in a minority of one in the European Community —seeming to embark on a route that would not endear him to his European colleagues, with whom we thought that he would work closely and have a great deal in common.

I am also disappointed that our amendments to Lords amendment No. 25 were not selected and were deemed to be technically incorrect; they would have given us a chance to vote on improvements to a very unsatisfactory situation.

The Minister explained that the amendment stemmed from a suggestion by one of his noble Friends who felt that it would help employers, although the suggestion does not seem to have been researched in any depth. I was reminded of a comment made yesterday by my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) when winding up the debate. He said that the minute that there seemed to be any conflict between the interests of employer and employee, the Government immediately jumped in without further examination and decided that the employer must be right in all circumstances. My hon. Friend said that that seemed to be some law of nature for the Government. I would go further and say that it saddens me that the Government always seem to be on the side of the bad employer rather than the good one. It is a great pity that they seem to react in a knee-jerk manner.

Good employers already give better maternity benefits than those in the Bill, which is a weak translation of the relevant European Community directive. Only bad employers wish to deny employees rights and are felt to be normal and natural elsewhere. It is they who cause us difficulties in that regard. Such employers exploit the good will of their work force. That seems to be why the amendment was introduced.

The Minister seemed to feel that not many women, employees or firms would be affected by the amendment, but how widely has he consulted? He has not had much time to consult about the amendment and the wisdom of altering the situation, adding greater complexity to an already complex set of arrangements which govern maternity provision.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The hon. Lady is usually extremely generous in her comments. However, is it not a little churlish to complain that no further amendments have come from the other place when, on Report, at her request and behest, we accepted two important amendments extending maternity rights? Does it not add insult to injury for her to complain that we did not consult fully before making amendments when she made no such complaints while urging the Government on Report to accept the changes in respect of entitlement to choose between sick leave and maternity leave, for example?

Ms Quin: I am sorry if the Minister feels that I am being churlish, but having looked at the report of the proceedings of the Bill in another place I was impressed by the number and quality of the amendments put forward, in particular by Baroness Lockwood and Baroness Turner. It is those amendments that I am disappointed the Government have not seen fit to accept.

I welcome the fact that in Committee the Government accepted some of the Opposition's suggestions, but to a certain extent consultation was not necessary as all members of the Committee had received wide representation from many people about the particular matter that the Government decided to take on board.

The Minister can correct me if I am wrong, but there does not seem to have been wide consultation or a wide measure of representation on this amendment. It seems to have resulted from a comment made in the other place, to which the Minister referred. Apart from that, I know of no other representations that were made. Perhaps the Minister will enlighten us if there were a large number of representations. The fact that he remains silent suggests that he has not been written to by a large number of firms on this issue.

In many ways the amendment is rather difficult to object to in detail, but we wish to vote against it as it is a symptom of the Government's willingness to see only one side of an argument and to introduce a further element of complexity which makes an already difficult position a great deal worse.

The Minister commented vaguely on the number of firms and individuals likely to be affected. It is a pity that he is unable to give further information. Certain women who are not well off may feel a compulsion to return to work even before 14 weeks, despite that being inadequate maternity leave. I have seen no figures on the number of women who might want to do that.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The hon. Lady is being extremely unfair on the Government. She suggests that we have been one-sided in respect of our response to representations on the amendment from the Confederation of British Industry. Equally, the CBI made representations that were not favourable to the amendment that the hon. Lady tabled at an earlier stage in the Bill's consideration, to give women the right to an extra four weeks' absence where they have a doctor's certificate indicating sickness arising from their pregnancy.

It is wrong of the hon. Lady to suggest that we have considered only one side of the argument. In this case, we responded to reasonable concerns expressed by business. I explained that it would be unlikely for notice not to be given, because most people will be courteous and have an arrangement with their employer, to ensure that such a thing would be done anyway.

Ms Quin: I accept that the Minister listened to the CBI's point of view, but responded to a different one— although I do not believe that a particular point of view one way or the other was overwhelmingly held by employers.

The Government were dragged kicking and screaming into accepting the terms of the EC directive. They did not positively vote in favour of it, but attempted to weaken it

[Ms Quin]

at many stages in its progress through the Community. When the Minister and I recently crossed swords in a European Standing Committee, the hon. Gentleman seemed to suggest that the Community should not bother itself with the whole range of social issues. He said that most robustly, and is now nodding his head, even though those social issues, as many members of the Committee forcefully pointed out, do not stem from the Maastricht treaty but from even further back than the treaty of Rome —to the treaty setting up the European Coal and Steel Community, when there was an obvious detailed and firm commitment to a social dimension in European institutions.

The Government's overall record on implementing that particular directive is far from distinguished. In nearly all cases, the Government have tended to back a narrow-minded employer's point of view.

The health and safety of the baby is paramount, and the amendment—which relates to the 14 weeks' maternity leave, which we feel is too short—encourages a system that is not in the interests of many mothers or their babies. Although it may be true that some employers like to receive notice if new mothers intend to return to work early, many employers disagree with the Government's overall view and would prefer to see longer rather than shorter maternity leave. They take that view in fairness to the employee and in terms of the ease of finding a replacement for the absent employee.

The shorter the period of maternity leave, the more difficult it can often be for an employer to obtain a replacement. A strong argument can be made for 18 weeks, plus the period of the right to return to work which many subject to employment protection currently enjoy but which the women who particularly concern us, at the end of the scale, do not enjoy. They are important points which the Government should bear in mind.

4 pm

Underlying the amendment is the argument that the Government have used many times. They do not want extra costs or administrative burdens to be placed on business. Behind that is the wider argument, which the Government persist in pursuing despite evidence to the contrary, that employment protection measures destroy jobs. That is the over-simplified view with which we have had to contend many times during our debates. In dealing with the argument about costs in another place, Viscount Ullswater did not provide detailed figures of how the costs break down in this and related matters.

I beg the Government to reconsider the question of costs. I recently came across an interesting publication produced by Business in the Community and the Institute of Personnel Management. It is entitled "Corporate Culture and Caring" and talks of what it calls the business case for family-friendly provision. Pages 59 and 62 show clearly that for many companies it is cheaper to give women generous maternity leave rather than to encourage women to leave their jobs or even to sack those who do not have employment protection because companies then have to bear the costs associated with starting and training a replacement. In the example cited, the company was saving about £250,000 by giving its employees generous maternity provision and generous help with child care and by following other family-friendly policies. I urge the Government to study the publication because a respectable case can be made for stating that employers can save money by offering proper employment protection, especially for women leaving work to have a baby.

The Government's costings were not very well received in another place. Indeed, they have been challenged there in the report of the Committee that scrutinises European legislation. It was found that the costs referred to by the Government could be offset by other considerations.

Although the amendment in itself is not substantial, it is nevertheless a symptom of the way in which the Government approach the issue. They have missed the opportunity provided by the Bill to give a fair deal to pregnant women and women who wish to return to work after having a baby. They have also, tragically, missed the opportunity to bring our standards up to those of many other countries in the European Community.

The Government seem to regard European legislation as a ceiling rather than a floor. In fact, it is meant to be only a floor of protection, and it is up to individual countries to provide extra protection if they wish. Unfortunately, the Government want to get away with the minimum, whereas we believe that they should go for the maximum in terms of benefits and employment rights for working women, which is the fair deal that they deserve.

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey): This part of the Bill, which confers a number of extremely limited new rights on employees protected by law, reveals the Government at their most schizophrenic. The Minister of State in particular and the Government in general believe that any statutory protection for people at work is somehow a burden on business, merely a cost and something which should be reduced to the absolute minimum. Now, however, they are biting their tongue while introducing legislation to give minimum new rights to people who previously did not have them. In this case, it is to pregnant women who do not qualify for the existing right to maternity leave because they have not been working in the same job for long enough.

What is happening? As has already been said, I believe that the Government have been forced by European directives against their will to introduce rights with which they do not agree. They have therefore tried to introduce them as reluctantly as possible, in the most complex possible way, so that although women will be allowed to take them up, in practical terms it will be extremely difficult to claim them. The maternity provisions in the Bill provide a prime example of the Government in that schizophrenic state.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I hate to ruin the hon. Lady's theory, but may I draw her attention to the fact that all Conservative Members stood on a manifesto commitment to introduce those rights? The notion that we were forced to do so by the European Community is absurd.

Secondly, were it not for the British presidency the combination of the antics of the European Parliament and those of the Italians would have prevented the directive from coming into force at all. It was thanks to the efforts of my right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State, now the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, in her role as president of the Social Affairs Council, that we were able to secure the directive, and the rights that accrue from it, within the Community.

Ms Eagle: I am touched that the Government seem so concerned about their manifesto commitments, although they have spent the past few months reneging on most of them in the Budget—but I do not want to go into that.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): My hon. Friend may agree that if there were any praise to be allocated for managing to get the directive through the European Community, it should go to Christine Crawley, the Member of the European Parliament for Birmingham, East, who moved heaven and earth in the EC to ensure that the directive got through, against the usual obnoxious and ludicrous obstruction by the British Government.

Ms Eagle: I agree with my hon. Friend. The Minister will not be surprised to know that that is also my interpretation of the shenanigans that went on in Europe while the maternity directive was going through the procedures there. Simply examining the record proves that the Government consistently opposed the directive, watered it down and delayed it as much as they could. In the end they could not find it in their heart to vote for it, so they abstained. That makes the case that they are reluctant converts to putting any legal protection for employees on to the statute book.

Two minor amendments have come from the House of Lords and, ironically, they put obligations on employees rather than on employers. That, too, illustrates the Government's priorities. One of the new provisions is that a woman has to give seven days' notice if she intends to return early. Nobody could strongly disagree with that, but it is disappointing that the Government have not seen fit to use the Lords stage of the Bill to clarify further some of the practical difficulties concerning the length of maternity leave proposed, which is 14 weeks.

Many women start their maternity leave with 11 weeks of their pregnancy to go. That leaves them a mere three weeks after giving birth not only to get the child home and start caring for it but to recover and then to think about the practicalities of going back to work and making provision for the care of such a young baby. Even that assumes that women are so mechanical that the date of conception can be precisely pinpointed and that the date of birth will be precisely nine months after conception, so that it will all fit neatly into the 14 weeks. Any mother, and any doctor, will tell us that there is no precise science and that the dates are simply estimates.

We discussed in Committee the fact that the absurd situation could arise, albeit in only a few cases, when the 14 weeks have passed and the baby has still not been born. We dealt with that problem to some extent in Committee, but, according to Maternity Alliance, 48 per cent. of women still take their maternity leave at a time that they think is about 11 weeks before the birth. That leaves them only three weeks to deal with all the practicalities that arise afterwards.

The trouble stems not from the fact that women may suddenly descend on their employers without warning and cause practical problems, but that 14 weeks is too short a time and presents practical difficulties, both to the woman and the child, which may affect the child's health. I would have preferred the Lords to consider that, rather than trying to impose more duties on employees.

There are all kinds of reasons why a woman who has given birth may not be in a position to return to work and leave the baby at home well and settled in a mere three weeks. For example, 5 to 7 per cent. of live births in Britain are premature. Depending on how premature the babies are, they may need special care and they may have to stay in hospital, which causes practical problems for new mothers ensuring that their children are okay and that they can visit them. All those possible problems militate against a mother trying to return to work before the baby is thriving and settled.

One per cent. of babies are extremely premature and that can lead to months of hospital treatment before the baby is allowed home. The existing law and the proposed change in the law says nothing about what a mother in such a situation is meant to do when contemplating returning to work. As premature births occur in a small percentage of cases, the Lords amendment should have considered the practical problems that a minority of women must face having given birth prematurely, with the problems that arise thereafter.

Ten per cent. of newborn babies have problems requiring special or intensive care, which can last for several weeks. It means that not only are those mothers unable to return to work early but they are not even in a position to return to work after their 14 weeks' maternity leave. Those mothers then have the choice of giving up their jobs or trying to negotiate an unpaid period of leave. Just when mothers are incurring all kinds of costs after having a baby, they must contemplate taking unpaid leave and losing their earning power altogether.

With multiple births—as a twin, I speak with some feeling, and 30 in every 1,000 live births are now triplets or more—birth weights are lower and it takes longer for those children to reach the stage when they are stable and thriving. There are also practical problems suddenly facing a mother who, with many young children, has the organisational task of getting her home into some sort of equilibrium so that she can contemplate returning to work.

Caesarean deliveries require a longer period of recuperation for the mother than for the baby. Again there are only three weeks in which the new mother is meant to have sorted out all the practical difficulties and found herself back at work. The problem is not the employer's of having a woman decide that she is going to return to work early and giving a week's notice. The problems are all on the side of the mother and baby. Why have the Government decided to move Lords amendment No. 24, after one comment in the Lords on that relatively trivial matter, and to ignore serious, practical problems that occur day in, day out for new mothers?

Other issues such as the health of baby must be considered. It is thought that 14 weeks is inadequate to establish breast-feeding—as encouraged by the Government and especially the Department of Health. The number of the mothers who breast-feed is declining, which is a health threat to new babies. It should have been in the Government's mind to ensure that, before having to return to work, a mother was able to establish adequate breast-feeding arrangements for her new baby so that she could protect its health to the best possible extent.

The timetable for the immunisation of babies is more suited to the old system of maternity benefit than the new 14-week rule. The Department of Employment seems to have given little consideration to these matters, despite the fact that the Department of Health is extremely concerned about them.

[Ms Eagle]

I should have liked the Lords amendments to give some recognition of those factors, yet once again the other place has not seen fit to make amendments to deal with such practical problems.

The Government are concerned about what they call "costs to business", but seemingly are not concerned about practical measures to ensure the health of mothers and babies and therefore the next generation.

4.15 pm

Lords amendment No. 25, rather than attempting to tackle the complex nature of the old system, new statutory provision and extra provisions that employers may make in some cases for the female work force, merely says that women can take the best provision that is available to them. Why on earth does not it simplify and consolidate maternity provision so that employers and mothers-to-be could simply work out the entitlement from a leaflet and plan for the birth of the baby?

Instead, we have three complex and convoluted systems working in tandem. Nobody is sure how they work together or what provisions a mother may be entitled to. The Lords amendment says that she can have the system that is best for her. Lords amendments Nos. 24 and 25 address the wrong problems. They are too obsessed with disbenefits to the employer rather than practical help to the mother.

Maternity leave should be seen as a right and not as a cost. If the Government were committed to sensible maternity provision of which Britain could be proud they would have considered it in that light rather than being so churlish about the new rights that they have introduced. Maternity leave is vital to ensure reasonable equal opportunities. It is a starting point for dealing with the many other matters necessary to ensure that women can take their rightful place in the economic life of the nation and in society in general.

There is a practical and moral case for women to be given provision that they and employers understand and that can be triggered easily. For those reasons, the Lords amendments address the wrong issues. They are too modest and they do not solve the serious problems that have resulted from the Government's seeming unwillingness to provide a simple, easy system of maternity provision that women can look forward to receiving.

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): I was staggered by the Minister of State's sedentary remark that the British Government saved the pregnant women at work directive. We have spent many hours discussing that, in Committee and in the Chamber, but clearly it has not sunk in with the Minister of State. Therefore, let us again examine how the British Government allegedly saved the directive.

When the directive was first proposed by the Commission, it suggested that any woman working since the beginning of her pregnancy, whether full or part-time, would be eligible for a minimum maternity leave entitlement of 14 weeks on full pay, with the flexibility of further time on 80 per cent. of pay.

I should like to ask the Minister of State whether the Government now support that. If he was in the Chamber, he would be able to give me an answer, but I shall return to it when he comes back.

The directive would apply to all companies, irrespective of size. Do the Government now support that? There would be two weeks' compulsory rest on full pay before the birth. Is the Minister now saying that the Government support that? Women would not lose pay for ante-natal appointments during working time. I understand that the Government support that principle—they just did not want it in the Bill because they said that it was self-evident, despite the fact that several industrial tribunal and other cases have shown that the matter is far from simple in practice. Periods of sickness during pregnancy could not be deducted from maternity leave. The Government have a rather ambiguous position on that matter, and I would like them to clarify it.

All work-related rights would be maintained during pregnancy. Dismissals linked to pregnancy would be outlawed. Employers would be required to improve conditions at work and find alternative jobs or an improved environment for pregnant and breast-feeding women should that be necessary. There must be a real alternative to night work for pregnant women, for at least eight weeks before the birth. That was the original draft directive introduced in 1990.

The final directive was approved two years later. It took two years, because the original proposals were watered down and blocked. The state that had more to do with that blocking process than any other was Britain. If the Minister is saying that the directive was saved by the Government, he has an obligation to say whether the draft directive containing real improvements for working women is now acceptable to the Government. If it is not, his statement that the Government saved the directive is no more than fluff.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) said, if anyone saved that directive and is responsible for ensuring that some modest improvements have been adopted in European and now also in British law, it is probably Christine Crawley, the MEP for Birmingham, East. Organisations such as Maternity Alliance, the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux and the Equal Opportunities Commission should be thanked for the good work they have done. We have nothing for which to thank the Government. They have given every concession with a bad grace, and have had to be pushed and shoved into doing so.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I am sure that Miss Crawley is a perfectly splendid person, but will the hon. Gentleman explain what role she played in ending the difficulties resulting from a conflict with the European Parliament? I had the impression that my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State was responsible for bringing that to a conclusion. I would be more than fascinated if the hon. Gentleman could explain the role played by Miss Crawley in that.

Mr. Burden: Christine Crawley was the chair of the Committee on Women's Rights at the European Parliament. That Committee, more than any other body, was responsible for bringing the various parties together to ensure that the views expressed by the British Government and others did not wreck the directive. That ensured a successful outcome of sorts.

If the Minister is saying that the Government were in favour of that directive, why did they object to the specific provisions suggested by the European Commission and

the European Parliament? Why was it that, in the final vote during a Fisheries meeting, Britain could not even bring itself to vote for the directive, but only abstained? It is odd to claim credit for a piece of legislation by saying that one abstained when it came up for a vote. That is an astonishing statement.

The amendment has been tabled by the Government because, without it, the Bill would be inconvenient. It would not be particularly inconvenient for women, but it would be inconvenient for employers, because a woman could return to work early after having a baby and not give notice. Taken in isolation, that point might be reasonable. But of course the legislation does not exist in isolation; it exists in the round.

If we want to ensure that the legislation is as convenient as possible for all concerned—mothers and employers—would it not be rather more useful for the Government to listen to the advice that they received from the Maternity Alliance, Opposition Members and all kinds of experts who suggested that the way that the legislation could be most simplified and made most effective and most convenient would be to extend the period of minimum maternity leave to 18 weeks—indeed, to extend it to the levels that were envisaged in the European directive in the first place?

If the Government consider that the welfare of the mother and the baby is important, let me give them some examples. Some have already been given by my hon. Friends. Under the Bill, even though there is some statutory protection for a woman from coming back to work before she is ready because of illness, there is very little or no protection if the baby is ill. Extending the period of statutory maternity leave in the way that we have been urging would not overcome that problem, but it would help. The Government have refused to help in that way.

We have already heard that the Government—indeed many Governments—encourage breast feeding, yet a woman will be required to go back to work perhaps just three weeks after she has had a baby. How on earth does that fit with a Government who claim to encourage breast feeding? The timing of the vaccination and inoculation programme that is recommended for babies these days just does not fit with the insistence that women should go back to work after just 14 weeks.

It has been proved that the chances of finding a child minder in the vital early weeks after birth are much more difficult. That position would be improved if the Government had seen fit to increase the period to 18 weeks. Those are real conveniences that the Government could have offered to employers and women, but they have not done so. Why not? They say that it is because of cost.

Cost has been mentioned time and again in respect of this aspect of the Bill. It is time that the point was answered. Ministers have thrown out figures and mentioned an alleged cost of £200 million if the maternity leave period is extended to 18 weeks. They have never stated the reasons or the basis for that calculation, but they have said that it would cost about £200 million and that it would be a burden on employers' costs. Two points arise.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I am not aware that the Government have ever said that. We have estimated the cost of the additional four weeks at £50 million. But £200 million is a big number and £50 million is also a big number, particularly when employers are obviously fighting to maintain employment and improve employment prospects for those who are unemployed.

Mr. Burden: I am grateful for that intervention. I find it interesting that the figure has apparently been revised downwards. I do not have to hand the *Hansard* reference showing where the £200 million comes from, but the reference exists. If the figure is now said to be £50 million and that it is a big cost, in terms of how much money the Minister and I have, it is a lot of money.

I would not say that £50 million, even if the amount were that much, was a great deal of money for a Government to spend to ensure that working women had decent maternity rights. When we compare £50 million with the £1 billion that was lost in one day in order to maintain the fig leaf over the Chancellor's economic policies, it does not seem a great deal.

Ms Quin: Some information which I did not have available during our earlier deliberations on this subject reinforces my hon. Friend's point. A letter from the Federation of Small Businesses to the previous Secretary of State for Employment states very clearly:

"From the point of view of small businesses, this increase"—

that is, the extension from 14 weeks to 18 weeks—

"would make little difference and we would have no objection to the proposed amendment."

The federation says that costs are incurred at an earlier stage and can stay in place for an extra four weeks without any problem at all, and that extending the leave to 18 weeks would simplify the system and make it easier for small employers who find the present set-up, like the set-up proposed in the Bill, a real headache.

4.30 pm

Mr. Burden: My hon. Friend makes an exceptionally valid point. Ministers manage to talk at two levels when they refer to the costs involved. They are not always over-specific about who they expect to stand which cost. They say that the cost will be a burden on employers. However, if the state was prepared to extend the period of statutory paid maternity leave to 18 weeks, the cost would not fall on employers—it would fall on us as a society. But is it too much to expect society to give working women the same sort of rights that women in other countries get?

My hon. Friend made an especially valid point about the cost to employers. If a woman is on maternity leave and an employer appoints a temporary replacement, costs have been incurred, and increasing the period to 18 weeks would make virtually no difference. Indeed, it may be that employers' costs are reduced in the medium and longer term because the consequence of having inadequate maternity leave and not seriously addressing the issue of a baby being ill or the mother not being ready to come back to work, and the problems of breast feeding and finding a child minder, is often to force working women to leave their jobs. The result is that the employer must pay the cost of advertising, finding a replacement and so on. It would be much better if decent maternity leave was given in the first place.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I apologise for interrupting the hon. Gentleman again. I suspect that the figure that he has in mind of £200 million probably relates to the compliance cost assessment of between £100 million and £250 million that we produced, a copy of which is in the Library. If he

[Mr. Michael Forsyth]

is right about no costs being involved, and if the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin) is right about the assessment of the Federation of Small Businesses that there is no cost in extending the period from 14 weeks to 18 weeks, there is nothing to prevent them from doing so. They are free to extend it. Employers can agree that the leave will be longer if they so wish. That is a contractual matter between employers and employees.

If the hon. Gentleman is right about all the advantages to business, we do not need to pass legislation to compel employers to do what he says is in their economic interests. However, our assessment is that it would add a cost of £50 million, which would create difficulties for employment in the future, especially for women.

Mr. Burden: It is precisely because enlightened employers understand that decent maternity leave provisions are in their interests, as well as in the interests of the mother, that so many of them offer maternity leave provisions that are well above the statutory minimum. The importance of having a statutory minimum is not to force enlightened or forward-looking employers to do what they see is in their interests and in the interests of the mother.

The importance of having a statutory minimum is to ensure that there is protection against bad employers, short-sighted employers or employers who have a narrow view of working women's rights, the interests of their enterprise and how they should operate in a civilised society, just as the importance of having wages councils has always been to ensure that pay does not fall below a minimum level.

The ridiculous thing about the Government's approach to this matter and the argument by the Minister, which underlies their proposal to abolish wages councils, will not make much difference as far as good employers are concerned. However, it will ensure that bad employers and bad employment practices are given statutory sanction. That is the tragedy of the Government's approach to employment legislation.

The amendment was not introduced when the matter was discussed in this place, but it was felt to be so important that it was introduced in another place. It was felt that, if the worst came to the worst and an unreasonable mother gave no notice to her employers but simply returned to work earlier than expected and demanded her work back—I cannot imagine many women doing that—the employer might have to bear an extra cost for a few days. That possibility is seen as so significant that it requires not only an amendment in another place but a debate here today.

Does it not reveal that the Government have an odd set of priorities when that possibility is seen as significant, but a mother's rights to decent child care, to breast-feed her baby for a reasonable period and to have a decent period of maternity leave are not seen to be important? It is not considered important to introduce legislation to ensure that bad employers are encouraged to become good employers. It seems that the Government, as so often, have their priorities wrong.

The statements that have been made about why it is unnecessary to legislate reveal the attitude that was displayed during the debates in Europe. I am pleased with the legislation as far as it goes. It is a small step forward, but does not go far enough. Instead of introducing one-sided amendments that benefit only the employer, it would be better if, for once, the Government started listening to working women, and introduced amendments to benefit them and guarantee decent maternity rights in this country.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): I am surprised to see that a Conservative Member wants to speak at this late stage in our debate. I was beginning to think that no Conservative Members held a view on the important issues raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin) and others. As my hon. Friend said, in yesterday's debate reference was continually made to the employer's need and rights. I hope that the Government will relax their guard a little and talk about the interests of the child. If they do not, they will go down as being the Government who favoured bosses before babies. I hope that that does not prove to be the case. Children should be given the highest priority.

Throughout the debates, both in Committee and in the other place, the Opposition have sought to improve on the Government's position. Some interesting exchanges have suggested that the Government are still in a rut and apparently listen more patiently to employers' organisations than organisations representing and supporting women of child-bearing age. That is an extraordinary position.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) referred, with the benefit of some personal knowledge, to the problems associated with multiple births. Knowing her sister as I do, I must say that if—or should I say when—she joins us in this place, it will present you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with an enormous problem. I cannot tell the two women apart and I look forward to seeing the Speaker being foxed over that.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): What is a collection of eagles called?

Mr. Miller: I am not sure.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden) mentioned an important aspect of the debate—the availability of child care for parents of young babies. It is undoubtedly extremely difficult to find child care for young babies. A recent Equal Opportunities Commission report states that fewer than 10 per cent. of children between birth and the age of four have places in non-family child care. Recent Government child care regulations require one worker for every three babies in day nurseries and other collective child care arrangements. Although that is welcome as a measure to improve the quality of care, it restricts the number of places for babies in some nurseries.

I hope, therefore, that the Government will have fresh thoughts as we see how the legislation proceeds. Thirty-six per cent. of mothers returning to full-time work rely heavily on child minders for care, but many child minders are reluctant to care for children under the age of six months. The National Childminding Association has commented that the nature of the care required for young babies is particularly intensive. That is likely to reduce the number of minders willing to look after them. Caring for a small baby can make it impossible for a child minder to look after any other child and can reduce her income significantly. The 53 per cent. of working mothers who rely on relatives for care may also find them unwilling to care for babies who are as young as three weeks.

The Select Committee on Health recently commented on the EC directive on the protection of pregnant women at work—a subject on which we have just heard an interesting exchange between the Minister of State and my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield. The Committee says in its second report that the United Kingdom Government have

"laid itself open to the accusation that it is only interested in the effects the Directive would have on employers and on the Treasury."

That underlines my point about the Government putting bosses before babies. Perhaps the Minister will try to refute that and adopt a more flexible approach to the legislation.

The maternity provisions of the Bill fail to give sufficient priority to the needs of the child. The legislation is wholly unsatisfactory, and I hope that the Government will give it another careful look.

Mr. Hartley Booth (Finchley): The speeches by the hon. Members for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden) and for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) were classic examples of the Opposition's casual approach to placing burdens on business. They seem to discuss the issue as if it could be divided into two separate, unrelated boxes. They seem to think that the burden on the employer is wholly unrelated to the situation of the mother and the child. The fact is that placing too many burdens on employers jeopardises chances of employment as well as the position of mother and child. The two issues are linked at every stage.

Ms Eagle: That was precisely the argument used before a Labour Government passed the equal pay legislation. It was said that, if women were granted equal pay, it would represent an extra cost and would militate against women being employed. Since then, there has, of course, been a huge growth in the employment of women.

4.45 pm

Mr. Booth: I prefer to stick to the point in hand. I maintain that the Opposition treat burdens on employers casually. Their attempts to sidetrack me from the issue do not detract from the point that I am trying to make.

Our 14-week statutory period has been pooh-poohed by the Opposition, but Germany, Ireland and the two countries of the Iberian peninsula all have similar periods. It is a perfectly respectable period, and children and mothers can deal with it. It is accepted as a compromise.

I support Lord Ullswater's amendment. It was his proposal on 6 May that led to the suggestion that employers should be protected from mothers who come back at no notice to reclaim their jobs. This sensible amendment merely attempts to give employers seven days——

Mr. Burden: The hon. Gentleman will be reassured to learn that I do not intend to take up his phrase about protecting employers from mothers. I would, however, like to ask him about his international comparisons. I am sure that he would agree that it is important to compare like with like. Is he, for instance, aware that Germany gives 14 weeks on 100 per cent. of salary and Ireland gives 14 weeks on 70 per cent. of salary? One of the criticisms of the legislation is that it guarantees nothing about pay. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that is a major omission from the Bill?

Mr. Booth: Pay is a matter for the DSS. I was only comparing the periods involved, and I do not want to widen the debate to other issues.

I support the Lords amendment because I think that we should prevent more burdens from being placed on employers. It would seem sensible of the Government to support that idea. That does not turn our party into a party that is against children or mothers—a ridiculous suggestion. The amendment prevents an additional burden from being imposed and allows for the smooth running of the workplace. Sudden events in the workplace cause friction and a great deal of trouble.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We have had an interesting debate. When my hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth) said that we should remove burdens, I thought that he was referring to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden). Having heard his speech, I can see why my hon. Friend was provoked to adopt such an undemocratic view.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Finchley about the importance of striking a balance between employment rights and costs. Compared with our European partners, we in Britain can be proud of the much higher proportion of our labour force that is in employment and the larger percentage of women who work. Apart from Denmark, which has about the same number of women at work, we have the highest proportion in Europe. In common with Denmark, we have a deregulated labour market. We may have different views about social provision, but we take a similar approach in respect of regulation in the labour market.

The socialist paradises that Opposition Members draw to our attention seem to find it difficult to provide employment opportunities for as large a proportion of their work forces—and especially for women—as we in Britain are able to provide. In the debates that are now taking place in the Social Affairs Council and elsewhere, it is evident that our European partners are coming to recognise the importance of regulation in the destruction of job opportunities—a recognition that is singularly absent from the contributions of Opposition Members.

Hon. Members cannot say, on the one hand, that they wish to see more opportunities for women to work and thereby contribute to our economy and, on the other hand, that they are prepared for whatever burdens on business are involved in the employment of those women. What they propose would deprive women of opportunity, just as has happened in Europe. It is no coincidence that the countries cited as examples to be followed have not been able to achieve the employment and job opportunities that Britain has achieved.

Ms. Quin: The Minister may have given the wrong impression about Denmark, which has a Government whose views have much more in common with those of the Labour party than with those of the British Government. The current Danish presidency of the European Community particularly wants progress to be made on many of the social directives that the British Government say will put additional burdens on business; thus, it is hardly right for the Minister to claim Denmark as an ally.

Mr. Forsyth: I was not claiming Denmark as an ally; I was merely making the point that the Danish labour market is not regulated to the extent that the hon. Lady

[Mr. Forsyth]

advocates. If she is saying that the Danish Government are about to embark on that course, I make a prediction: Denmark will not be alongside Britain at the top of the league in terms of the provision of employment opportunities for people of both sexes. The policies that Opposition Members advocate would destroy jobs—a fact that is becoming increasingly understood throughout the Community.

Ms Eagle: Does the Minister agree that, in almost all cases one can think of, men too are responsible for the birth of children? A woman' capacity to give birth should not be regarded as some kind of extra cost that she takes into the workplace—a cost that makes firms disinclined to employ her. Reasonable maternity provision should be associated with extended paternity provision; in that way, the costs could be shared between the genders, within the family, and employers would not be encouraged to regard the woman as a walking womb that imposes extra costs.

Mr. Forsyth: I agree with the hon. Lady on her biological points, but not on her labour market points. She must understand that it is not discriminatory to say that we must be careful about the costs that are imposed on employers. The hon. Lady's solution would involve more costs through the provision of paternity leave, but those costs would have to be borne by employers. Employers make their money by selling goods and services. If their goods and services are no longer competitively priced, employment opportunities are destroyed. There is a balance to be struck.

In suggesting that the Government are putting business before babies, the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) ruined the quite good reputation that I thought he was building up following his service on the Standing Committee, where he seemed to be a thoughtful person who added a great deal to our debates. His description of a measure that provides a right to 14 weeks' maternity leave, with entitlement to all the normal benefits of contracts of employment, apart from wages or salary, as well as comprehensive protection against dismissal or unfair selection for redundancy on maternity-related grounds and new rights for women who have to be suspended from work on maternity-related health and safety grounds, is absurd. To say that this is putting bosses before babies is so ridiculous that I can only imagine that the hon. Gentleman does not really think it but put it in a press release to his local newspaper—or perhaps there is some other, equally fatuous, reason for his coming out with such nonsense.

Mr. Miller: I am grateful to the Minister for giving me an idea. I have not yet put this in a press release, but I think I shall now do so.

If the Government had listened more carefully to the advice of many professional organisation—particularly the Maternity Alliance—they could have gone much further without imposing any significant additional costs on employers. My hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin) made the point in the context of the Federation of Small Businesses. Against that background, the Minister's remarks are churlish.

Mr. Forsyth: I should not be at all concerned if the hon. Gentleman were to issue such a silly press release. It might help to achieve the result that we should have had at the polls last year—the election of Mr. Andrew Pearce. A few more daft statements of that type will see the hon. Gentleman on his way out of the House.

Mr. Burden: I should like to press the Minister on the issue of costs. I shall try to avoid using the word "burden", but I may not succeed. The hon. Gentleman prayed Denmark in aid with regard to regulation. He probably knows that Denmark offers 28 weeks' maternity leave on 90 per cent. of salary. If the Minister regards that as a deregulated market, his view is different from mine. If he wishes to avoid the imposition of an excessive "burden" —I have used the word—on businesses but accepts the need to ensure decent maternity rights, he must accept also that the state should ensure decent levels of statutory provision. Would not that be better than cutting provision for working women?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman is getting frightfully muddled. He is confusing regulation of the labour market with benefits. We are not dicussing benefits, which are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security. What the hon. Gentleman has said about the provision of welfare services in Denmark is quite right. That is why Denmark has very high levels of taxation.

I was not making the point that Denmark is an ally; I was simply pointing out something that Opposition Members do not seem to recognise—that, comparatively speaking, a very high proportion of our population are in work. Let hon. Members consider countries—such as Spain, whose unemployment percentage is almost twice ours—that have embraced the minimum wage and all the other social protection policies so beloved of Opposition Members.

Of course Conservatives are committed to the provision of a fair deal for employees, but they are not prepared to accept advice that would put people on the dole. If people were unemployed, they would not have the benefit of the legislation that we have brought before the House over the past 14 years.

The hon. Members for Northfield and for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) said some very odd things. The hon. Lady said that no one could disagree with seven days' notice, yet the hon. Member for Gateshead began her speech by telling us that Opposition Members would vote against the amendment. As the hon. Lady has said that she could not possibly disagree with that, I expect to see her vote with the Government in the Division Lobby. The hon. Member for Northfield said that he did not imagine that anyone would not give notice; presumably he will be in the Division Lobby with us as well.

Ms Eagle: If the Minister had listened more carefully to the overall thrust of my remarks, he would not be quoting half-sentences out of context and he might have picked up that I said that the amendment dealt with a fairly trivial matter that happened on only a few occasions. Other matters affecting the health of mothers and babies are more serious and much more common, but the Government have seen fit not to deal with those. The thrust of my speech was that we should spend more time addressing the real issues rather than spend time on relatively trivial matters.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Lady has not added to what I have said. She said that the matter was trivial and that no

one could disagree with seven days' notice. Now she says that she will vote against what she agrees is a reasonable provision because it is not something else. That is an extraordinary basis on which to vote down a perfectly sensible amendment.

Ms Eagle: It is tactical.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Lady says that it is tactical. Her constituents will be astonished if they find that her voting record on amendments or other legislation is based not on what is in them but on what she thinks should be in them. That is absurd. If that is the hon. Lady's best argument to justify her speeches, she had better get herself a new research assistant.

5 pm

Mr. Burden: I shall intervene before the Minister gets too carried away by what he perceives to be Opposition contradictions. In Committee, Conservative Members voted against amendments to ensure that women had clear rights not to be subjected to action by employers if they sought time off for ante-natal care and relaxation classes. Those hon. Members said that that happens anyway, but there is clear evidence from tribunal decisions that it does not. Conservative Members are throwing stones from glass houses.

Mr. Forsyth: I did not entirely understand the hon. Gentleman's point. My assessment of what he said is that he could not imagine that anyone would not give notice and that he would support the amendment.

Mr. Burden: I said that I could not imagine many women not giving notice. I then gave the hypothetical situation of a woman who does not give notice to her employer but returns unannounced to work, demanding her job from that moment. The net cost of that to the employer would be a few days' pay while the temporary employee was still there. I contrasted the Government's concern for the cost of that few days' pay with the extent to which they are prepared to amend the Bill to show a lack of concern for women who are denied access to decent child care, are unable to breast-feed their babies for long enough and face all the other problems associated with the fact that there is no maternity leave of 18 weeks.

Mr. Forsyth: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his explanation. He disagrees with the Government about the extent to which the protection should be extended. However, if he votes against the amendment, he will look ridiculous, because the amendment says that there should be seven days' notice. The hon. Gentleman gaily writes off a week's pay for a temporary worker as it if were of little consequence. That betrays the fact that he has never had to run a company or a small business and does not realise that such sums are often the difference between profit and loss. They also make a difference to growth of employment and employment opportunities. As we say in Scotland, "Many a mickle maks a muckle." The hon. Gentleman should be more careful with other people's money.

Ms Quin: I should not like the Minister to misunderstand our reason for voting against the amendment. As I have explained, the amendment adds a rule, an extra complexity, to an already complex system. From the beginning, we have argued for a comprehensive overhaul and simplification of the system of maternity leave. We are using the amendment as an example of the complexities that we have argued against all along.

The Minister has done little to justify the amendment. He has not said how many people will be affected by it, nor has he spoken about the number of people who were consulted before the amendment was tabled. If he could give us more information about that and say that he will look at the overall system of maternity leave with a view to making it much more simple, along the lines that we have suggested, that would be something else.

Mr. Forsyth: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for contradicting her hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey, who said that no one could disagree with seven days' notice. She was clearly wrong, because the hon. Member for Gateshead, East obviously disagrees with it. She says that it unnecessarily complicates the legislation. Following a commitment to the hon. Member for Gateshead, East, we tabled an amendment on Report to give women the choice of sick leave rather than maternity leave if they were absent between the 11th and the sixth week of the expected week of childbirth.

Again at the hon. Lady's request, I tabled an amendment to provide four weeks' extra protection against maternity-related dismissal in cases where a medically certified sickness prevents women from returning to work at the end of maternity leave. The hon. Lady did not urge me not to do that on the ground that it complicated the provisions, as it does. However, it is not a question of whether it complicates the provisions. We want a system that is workable. The legislation may be complex, but the position of the employer and the employee will be perfectly straightforward.

The hon. Member for Gateshead, East seems to apply one argument when it suits her and another when it suits people who are making representations. When the hon. Lady pressed me to table the amendments, she did not urge me to rush out and consult everybody. She wanted me to agree in Committee to consider the matter and table amendments at an early stage. She urged us to make those amendments in respect of the additional month after the end of the period that would be available for someone who was suffering from pregnancy-related sickness.

The CBI and others expressed reservations about those amendments. I have tabled a perfectly reasonable amendment, and the hon. Lady's colleagues have said that no one could disagree with it. However, because it has come from the CBI and is subject to exactly the same process as her amendments, she criticises us for not conducting proper consultation.

We are a listening Government. We listened to the arguments and tabled amendments in the light of discussions at every stage. The amendments will result in substantial extra benefits for women who become pregnant while they are still at work. Opposition Members cannot bring themselves to acknowledge that it is a good measure and fulfils the Government's manifesto commitment.

The hon. Members for Northfield and for Wallasey said that the Government had abstained on the vote on the European directive. We abstained because we thought that it was being issued on an inappropriate treaty base. It is extraordinary that Opposition Members should question our enthusiasm for the directive as adopted because we abstained on the issue of the treaty base. My right hon.

[Mr. Forsyth]

Friend the then Secretary of State for Employment moved heaven and earth in the presidency to conclude the Council's deliberations following the intervention of the European Parliament. That Parliament tried to overturn an agreed position by the Council of Ministers, thus risking the destruction of the directive itself. It was thanks to the Government's efforts in the presidency that the directive was brought into force. Opposition Members suggested that the Labour party in the European Parliament carried the day; in fact, it was the European Parliament, and the conflict that arose between it and the Council of Ministers, that put the directive at risk.

Ms Eagle: The Minister has just explained why the Government chose to abstain, although they really agreed with all the directive's provisions. Was that a tactical decision?

Mr. Forsyth: If the hon. Lady follows such matters closely, she will know that we abstained on the working time directive. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made clear, we did not accept the treaty base, and we shall be challenging the directive in the European Court. When we believe that the treaty base is wrong, we shall abstain. The hon. Lady clearly does not pay careful attention to these matters.

The position on the EC pregnant workers directive was made clear. A common position text was agreed in December last year; it was originally produced by the Dutch presidency, because the Commission's original proposal was unacceptable to the great majority of member states. The treaty base, which we challenged, provided for qualified majority voting, not unanimity, and the United Kingdom was never in a position to threaten a veto—if that is what the hon. Member for Wallasey was implying. Ultimately, the United Kingdom secured agreement through its presidency; that is why the directive applies throughout Europe. The legislation is before the House because we had made a manifesto commitment to present such measures. We have been as good as our manifesto commitment and we were elected to implement it.

Mr. Burden: Can we be clear about the nature of the disagreements that we are discussing?

Mr. Deputh Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Not unless they are related to the amendment.

Mr. Burden: I am sure that they are, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the ground that the Minister has been referring to them himself——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I was about to call the Minister to order.

Mr. Forsyth: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was misled by Opposition Members, who made scurrilous remarks about the Government while you were not in the Chair, and thus unable to remind them of the matter under discussion. I hasten to add that I am making no criticism of Madam Speaker.

Rather than proceeding further with my speech, I invite the House to endorse the amendment. It is perfectly reasonable, as Opposition Members have said. I look forward to seeing the hon. Members for Northfield and for Wallasey in the Aye Lobby.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 25, in page 42, line 40, at end insert—

("Requirement to inform employer of return during maternity leave period.

.—(1) An employee who intends to return to work earlier than the end of her maternity leave period shall give to her employer not less than seven days notice of the date on which she intends to return.

(2) If an employee returns to work as mentioned in subsection (1) without notifying her employer of her intention to do so or without giving him the notice required by that subsection her employer shall be entitled to postpone her return to a date such as will secure, subject to subsection (3), that he has seven days notice of her return.

(3) An employer is not entitled under subsection (2) to postpone an employee's return to work to a date after the end of her maternity leave period.

(4) If an employee who has been notified under subsection (2) that she is not to return to work before the date specified by her employer does return to work before that date the employer shall be under no contractual obligation to pay her remuneration until the date specified by him as the date on which she may return.")—*[Mr. Michael Forsyth.]*

Motion made, and Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 282, Noes 238.

Division No. 298] **[5.13 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger

French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*

Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Gordon McMaster and
Mr. Jon Owen Jones.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Lords amendments Nos. 26 to 28 agreed to.

New Clause

Lords amendment: No. 29—*Entitlement to itemised pay settlement*—

(". After section 146(4) of the 1978 Act (provisions disapplied in relation to employment below minimum number of hours weekly) there shall be inserted—

"(4A) Subject to subsection (4B), subsection (4) shall have effect as respects section 8 subject to the following modifications, namely—

(a) the substitution of a reference to eight hours weekly for the reference to sixteen hours weekly, and

(b) the omission of the words "Subject to subsection (5), (6) and (7)",

(4B) Subsection (4A) shall not apply in relation to employment if, at the relevant date, the number of employees employed by the employer, added to the number employed by any associated employer, is less than twenty.

(4C) For the purposes of subsection (4B) "relevant date" means the date on which any payment of wages or salary is made to an employee in respect of which he would, apart from subsection (4B), have the right to an itemised pay statement."")

Read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): With this it will be convenient also to discuss Lords amendment No. 41.

Ms Quin: I beg to move, as an amendment to the Lords amendment, amendment (a) leave out subsection (4B).

This is an important amendment and we will seek to divide the House on it, as it seeks to establish an important right for many part-time workers who will not otherwise be covered by the welcome concession by the Government.

The amendment concerns the right of employees to receive an itemised pay statement. Many of us feel that that is a basic right for all people in employment. However, until the Government agree to amend the Bill, employees who work for between eight hours and 16 hours a week have to work for the same employer for five years before they have the right to an itemised pay statement. We find it quite amazing that some people have to work for one employer for that length of time before they can enjoy what most of us would consider a basic and necessary right.

We are glad that, in order to respond to concerns expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House, the Government have agreed to extend the right to an itemised pay statement to many part-time workers who work for between eight and 16 hours per week. The Lords amendment excludes part-time workers working between eight and 16 hours in firms with fewer than 20 employees. We feel strongly that that rather large derogation from the new rule is unjustified, so we have tabled our amendment to do away with it.

The arguments advanced by the Minister in the other place in favour of the amendment were similar to those that I would put forward in favour of our amendment, which extends that right even further. In the other place, the Minister said that employees should have the right to know how their pay is made up, with which I am sure my hon. Friends agree strongly. But we do not see why that right should be denied to workers in firms with fewer than 20 employees.

5.30 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the hon. Lady agree that the majority of difficult contractual disputes between employers and employees arise in smaller firms, particularly those with half a dozen to a dozen employees, where the hours of work may not be fully noted and where the conditions may not be fully recorded because they vary from time to time? Does she further agree that the Lords amendment will remove a necessary protection from a large number of workers if the figure is as high as 20?

Ms Quin: I agree with the points made by the hon. and learned Gentleman, to which I shall come later. The evidence available to us suggests that what the hon. and learned Gentleman says is right and that the greatest

difficulties have arisen for workers in small firms who have wanted itemised pay statements but have been unable to obtain them.

Unfortunately, there is much evidence that the denial of itemised pay statements to employees is part and parcel of an attempt by employers criminally to defraud the Treasury by not registering employees properly for national insurance purposes. Therefore, they have been happy to deny their employees this right. Unless employees caught in that situation have written evidence of deductions from their pay, they might even be thought to be colluding with the employer in such frauds and malpractices. That is another important reason why we want to extend the right to an itemised pay statement as widely as possible.

There is no doubt that having the right to an itemised pay statement would simplify the process of resolving disputes over pay and deductions which can arise, causing problems for employers and employees. In addition, the right to an itemised pay statement can be crucial to an employee's attempt to gain benefits to which he is entitled. Without such written proof in the form of an itemised pay statement, an employee may have great difficulty in proving his entitlement to benefits which may enable him to make ends meet. We are talking not about something theoretical, but about something that is of immense practical help to people if the system is made to work properly.

It is also important for employees to have written proof of their pay—and conditions—if they transfer to another employer who asks for such information. I should also mention the value of such a system to the Child Support Agency that the Government have set up. There again, a person may need proof of his or her financial situation in the form of an itemised pay statement in order to support his or her case.

It is odd that the Government should be so keen to ensure that the check-off arrangement should be spelt out in seemingly endless detail, as they clearly were in the early parts of the Bill, but are not prepared to allow every employee the basic right to an itemised pay statement. Surely, if the Government are so keen on allowing employees to see what deductions are made for trade union subscriptions, they should also be keen for employers to show employees the state of their pay and the full range of deductions.

Those are important matters, to which, to be fair to the Government, the Minister in another place referred, but, having made those important points, he agreed, surprisingly, to deny so many people the right to an itemised pay statement.

The Government have come out with some curious arguments for not wishing to extend that right to all people, even in small companies. The argument about costs has been put forward, but I do not know whether the Government will be able to persuade us today any more easily than the Minister in the other place was able to persuade the Members there. He singularly failed to convince them of what he was saying about costs. The cost of giving employees an itemised statement may be slight. The Minister in the other place agreed that various standard proformas were available, making it easy for employers to complete such requirement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: During the discussion on the previous set of amendments, the hon. Lady criticised me for bringing forward an amendment without having consulted widely. Does she not think that it would be right for the Government, having consulted on this matter, to take account of the representations that we have received from organisations such as the Forum of Private Business?

Ms Quin: I hope that the Minister will consider the information and evidence available to him from all quarters. We have received interesting information from the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux and organisations such as the Fawcett Society. They have talked to employers in some detail in order to try to work out the costs involved.

They concluded that many employers can produce itemised pay statements without any difficulty whatever, that they can be absorbed into existing administrative costs and that the booklets of proforma statements, which can be easily completed, would make that an easy job for small businesses. I hope that the Minister will address that evidence, as well as other representations made to him. I can only go on the representations that have been made to us, which have all been in favour of extending that right to many, if not all, employees.

It is not only Opposition Members who are concerned about that issue. In Committee, the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) spoke first about extending that right to part-time workers—those who work between eight and 16 hours per week. We agreed strongly with the points that she made, and it was partly as a result of her representations that the Government tabled this amendment. However, I am not sure that the hon. Lady would support the Minister in this derogation for companies with fewer than 20 employees.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *indicated assent.*

Ms Quin: The Minister is nodding. In that case I am disappointed with the hon. Lady, because it goes against many of the arguments that she advanced in Committee, where she spoke of the individuals about whom we are concerned in this amendment—those working in small companies that may exploit them by not giving them this information.

I well remember the Minister in Committee making one of his revealing jokes. He said that there seemed to be cross-party agreement about the amendment, which probably meant that it was wrong. That tells us something about the Minister's attitude. I urge him to take into consideration the comments made not only from this side of the House but by Conservative Members in Committee, as well as the wealth of opinion from the Fawcett Society and the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, to which I pay tribute for its work on that issue.

I refer also to the views of organisations such as the townswomen's guilds, the National Federation of Women's Institutes and the United Kingdom Federation of Business and Professional Women, which all support the argument that we are advancing today. Those organisations carry considerable weight, not least in Conservative constituencies. The Minister ought to take that into account, consult those organisations, and learn their views. They feel strongly that many employees are being denied a basic right that most people would consider normal and natural in a civilised society.

I referred to evidence collected by various organisations that some employers who are trying to defraud the authorities deny employees the right to an itemised pay

[Ms Quin]

statement. NACAB states that many employers do not issue employees with itemised pay statements, and that there is often doubt whether the employer is paying tax and national insurance contributions on behalf of the employee.

A CAB in Essex reported that employees at one establishment were paid in cash, and handed back an amount to cover their tax and national insurance—but had no evidence whether those moneys were being passed on to the appropriate authorities. No itemised pay statement was issued, and the employer "turned nasty" when asked for one. The CAB's client found another job and asked for her P45. Instead of receiving an updated P45, that which she had originally given the first employer was returned to her—which seems to prove that that employer was trying to defraud the system and to avoid the regulations covering both employers and employees.

A CAB in Warwickshire reported a client whose wages were paid partly by cheque and partly in cash, to enable the employer to default on national insurance and PAYE. The bureau explained that, as the client lived in a tied cottage, she was very reluctant to complain, because obviously not only her job but also her home was at risk.

A CAB in Shropshire commented:

"It is often only when employees leave their employment that they discover that their employer has not been deducting or paying over PAYE, income tax and national insurance contributions."

It is extremely important for the right to an itemised pay statement to be widely available, so that attempted fraud can be overcome.

The right hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) mentioned the number of people who might be affected. The Government are excluding many by the derogation that the amendment introduces. Figures supplied by the Library suggest that 7 million employees work in businesses having fewer than 20 employees—about 31 per cent. of all those in work. A number work for only between eight and 16 hours a week. I do not have Government figures, but I believe that hundreds of thousands of workers would be affected by the Government's proposal. I should be grateful for any figures that the Minister can give.

I understand that about 780,000 people work more than eight hours but fewer than 16 hours a week in companies employing fewer than 20 people. That substantial figure represents the number who will fall foul of the Government's amendment. We ask the Minister to consider those 780,000 people and their right to an itemised pay statement.

5.45 pm

The Minister may argue that there is nothing to stop employers issuing itemised pay statements. That is true, but we are concerned about employers who do not observe that practice. If many firms are already able to issue such statements, we see no reason why others should not be able similarly to comply.

We are concerned also about employees who work fewer than eight hours a week. Although we have not tabled an amendment on that specific issue, it touches on the Government amendment under consideration. We see no justification for the eight-hour cut-off limit. In Committee, the Minister said that it would be inconvenient for employers to issue pay statements to those who only work two or three hours a week, but I ask the Minister to view the matter from the employee's point of view.

An employee may work fewer than eight hours in one job but additional hours in another job. He or she may need to prove total entitlement to certain benefits, want to transfer to another employer, or meet all the other possible scenarios that I mentioned earlier.

Many people in Britain today work in unsatisfactory part-time jobs. Sometimes, they have two or three such jobs—and may ultimately find it difficult to claim pension or other entitlements if they are unable to prove that they have worked as many hours as they have.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The hon. Lady suggests that anyone in Britain who employs a cleaning lady, gardener, or someone else to do the odd job should be required—regardless of the amount of time worked—to produce an itemised pay statement as a matter of law. Is that her proposal?

Ms Quin: Employees, no matter in what capacity they work, should receive an itemised pay statement if they want one. Under the Government's rules, they will have no such entitlement. The Government do not understand the difficulties confronting many people in Britain today who have been casualised by Government employment policies. They work week in, week out in unsatisfactory conditions of employment, and then discover that the hours worked count for very little in respect of their benefits and pension rights, and that there is little to which to look forward in the future. They are therefore twice handicapped.

I beg the Minister to examine more carefully than he seems prepared to do some of the dire working conditions that obtain in Britain today, of which the denial of an itemised pay statement is part and parcel. It may seem a small part, but it is an important element in an unsatisfactory equation.

By removing the derogation for firms employing 20 or fewer employees and the time limit, the Minister will take a small but significant step towards improving the lot of part-time and temporary workers.

We are concerned that part-time workers appear to have such a bad deal. In order to be entitled to many employment rights, they have to work for one employer for five years, which, in effect, denies about two thirds of part-time workers any employment rights at all. It is an absolute scandal.

Other European countries do not make the same rigid distinctions between full-time and part-time workers; nor do they distinguish between different types of part-time work. For example, they do not distinguish between part-time work lasting 16 hours or eight hours, a distinction which is so unfavourable for many part-time workers in Britain.

The Government should consider far more seriously extending full-time employment rights to part-time workers. They sometimes accuse us of being anti part-time workers. We are not, but we are anti part-time work in appalling conditions. We want part-time work to be a tremendous opportunity for women and men, but unfortunately it is not: it is merely a way of exploiting them and giving them fewer employment rights than their full-time counterparts. We are not opposed to part-time work—we are very much in favour of it—but we do not

want it to be used to penalise people for the rest of their working lives, which is what appears to be happening under the system approved by the Government.

I refer the Minister of State to the excellent report produced some time ago by the Committee which considers European legislation in another place. It is a very good report, which pours cold water on the Government's claims about the extra costs incurred in extending many employment rights to part-time workers. If the Minister studies the information in detail, he will see that a very impressive case was made for extending such rights to part-time workers.

Indeed, a survey referred to in the Committee's report showed that less than 1 per cent. of firms which were contacted quoted poorer employment rights as the reason for employing part-time workers. Generally, there seemed to be a great lack of conviction in the Government's case that extending even basic rights to part-time workers would cost the earth. The evidence for the Government's argument is patchy, but the evidence that British part-time workers are getting a poor deal is not patchy but overwhelming.

I urge the Minister to do what he has often said he favours, and encourage quality part-time work by accepting the ideas that we have proposed in all the debates. As a modest beginning, he could welcome the amendment and thus allow those who want an itemised pay statement to have it. It is a basic right, which should no longer be denied.

Mr. Alex Carlile: My comments relate to the 20-employee limit. I am surprised that the Government have chosen such a high figure. It is almost inconceivable that an employer who has 19, 15 or even a dozen employees could remain in business if he was incapable of filling in a small form setting out the items that comprise an employee's pay. It does not require sophisticated machinery, a chartered accountant or a qualified bookkeeper to do so; it requires only a duplicate pad on which the employer's bookkeeper—who is often not qualified—jots down for the benefit of the employee the number of hours worked, the hourly rate for the work, any overtime, and any other items which make up his pay. If an employer is not capable of carrying out such rudimentary book work, it is unlikely that he will stay in business very long.

As I am sure the Government have learnt in the past three years in particular, it is often small firms which go bankrupt or into liquidation because they are incapable of completing their books properly. The resulting debt is often crippling for the victims. All hon. Members are aware of small businesses in their constituencies whose proprietors have faced bankruptcy or near-bankruptcy because of the inefficiency of other small firms and organisations purchasing from them.

I would suggest that modest bookkeeping requirements, including the provision of itemised pay statements, help towards the necessary measure of efficiency. I do not suggest that the requirement should be placed on the very smallest employers, those employing two, three, or perhaps fewer than half a dozen employees. In that respect, I take a slightly different view from the Labour party, but an employer who employs more than half a dozen people can be regarded as significant in an employment market where such a large proportion of working people are employed in small firms.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I hear what the hon. and learned Gentleman is saying: He agrees with the Government that there should be an exemption for small firms, but says that it should apply to those employing six rather than 20 people. The Liberal party has not tabled an amendment to reflect that view. I should have thought that, if the hon. and learned Gentleman believed that the figure should be six rather than 20, he would have been able to make a case for that idea and tabled an amendment. What does he expect the Government to do in response to his representations, given the fact that we have reached this stage in our consideration of the Bill?

Mr. Carlile: I do not harbour the illusion that the hon. Gentleman would have urged his right hon. and hon. Friends to vote for such an amendment had I tabled it. It is for the Government to make the regulations. They are well aware of representations that have been made. *[Interruption.]* If the Minister will listen for a moment, I repeat that the Government are well aware of the all-party representations made on this issue in Committee.

As we have been reminded, it was the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning), who is sitting behind the Minister, who urged on the Committee—indeed, who assisted Labour Members in urging on the Committee—an amendment that was incorporated in part in Lords amendment No. 29. It is somewhat surprising that the hon. Lady now seems to accept that the 20-employee limit is appropriate. When the Government fix an appropriate level, they should act in the interests of both employers and employees.

In an intervention, the Minister of State mentioned the Forum of Private Business. I have considerable regard for that organisation, which provides useful information to hon. Members, enabling us to keep abreast of the requirements and concerns of small employers in particular. However, the organisation is not always right. Of course, the way in which it collects its material is founded on the sending of questionnaires for which it devises the questions.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *rose*——

Mr. Carlile: I shall give way in a moment.

As a result, the information provided by the questionnaires may not always be entirely reliable in considering such issues. Does the Minister still want me to give way?

Mr. Forsyth: I will just say that there were no Liberal representatives on the Committee, but, had the hon. and learned Gentleman had the pleasure of serving on it, as many hon. Members present today did, he would know that we listened to the Opposition's arguments and accepted many amendments.

Mr. Miller: Many?

Mr. Forsyth: Many. My point is that at no stage have the Liberals tabled an amendment suggesting that six rather than 20 would be the appropriate limit. I am rather surprised to hear the hon. and learned Gentleman talk down the importance of representations made by the Forum of Private Business, but we had similar representations from the Confederation of British Industry.

Mr. Carlile: I was telling the Minister that it is surprising to hear that the hon. Member for Tiverton, who

[Mr. Carlile]

in Committee apparently asked for something rather more extensive, now seems to accept the rather grudging 20-employee limit. That point was entirely fairly made.

Mr. Forsyth *rose*——

6 pm

Mr. Carlile: I shall not give way to the Minister again, because we do not want a ping-pong debate.

I regret that the Government have not dealt with the amendment in the spirit that I understood from reading the Committee debate—I did not have the advantage of serving on the Committee—was the basis on which the Minister responded to that debate. In response to his claim that I tried to talk down the Forum of Private Business, I add that I did the precise opposite. I was at pains to point out that the information that that organisation provided was helpful. Nevertheless, it is not always right, and in my view it was not right on that occasion.

There is another practical aspect of the 20-employee limit that the Government should consider seriously. Disputes that arise about terms and conditions of employment often relate to hours worked, and especially to whether national insurance contributions should have been paid, or whether the full tax due under the PAYE arrangements has been paid. As the Minister intervened in my speech, I should be grateful if he would take the trouble to listen for the next two or three minutes. I was addressing a comment to him in the hope that he might respond to it when he replies to the debate.

As the Minister knows, the disputes that arise between employers and employees relate to a contract between the two parties. An employee is often at a considerable disadvantage if he has no documentary evidence of the terms and conditions of his employment, and especially of the hours worked in a particular week or other period. If an employer chooses to act dishonestly—he may well choose to do so if the issue is whether national insurance contributions or tax should have been paid—he can enter false particulars in his records at the time when the dispute arises. I am afraid that my experience over more than 20 years as a practitioner in the courts is that, unfortunately, that is just the sort of thing that happens from time to time. Of course, most employers are completely honest, but the employers with whom employees have the greatest difficulty are often those who are not.

When, for example, an employee comes to his Member of Parliament and says that he is in dispute with his former employer, who should have paid national insurance contributions, the first thing that the conscientious Member of Parliament asks to see is documentary evidence of the employment. If the employee is not entitled to an itemised pay statement, even when he has been working as many as 16 hours a week, he is at a disadvantage. This can lead to a contest between the oral evidence of the employee and the not always entirely accurate or honest written evidence of the employer. Such disputes take up much time. They come before small claims courts regularly and take up the time of citizens advice bureaux. It is notable that the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux takes precisely the same view as I.

Why are the Government not prepared to impose on businesses that are not the smallest the relatively minor requirement to provide a weekly or monthly statement of particulars for employees? It is not asking much. I ask the Minister to explain the reasoning behind the views expressed by the CBI to which he referred. We have not heard the reasoning in the debate so far and there cannot be many CBI members who either could or would wish to take advantage of the distinction that the Government, with the arbitrary cut-off limit of 20 employees, seek to draw between large and small businesses.

If the Minister is unwilling to change his mind, I ask him at least to give the House an assurance. My request is supported by the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, which is concerned about the issue. Will he ensure that his Department monitors the operation of the 20-employee limit? I understand that it could be altered by statutory regulations, so primary legislation would not be needed. If the Minister were prepared to monitor the operation of the limit, and if the Government found that abuse was taking place, it would be possible to introduce regulations to reduce the limit. I hope that the Minister will find that to be a reasonable approach.

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): I rise briefly to encourage the House to support the Lords amendments and to resist the blandishments of the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin). I should declare two interests, one as a trade unionist—I am a member of Equity, enjoying what the union kindly describes as "honourable withdrawal", which I trust will continue for a full three decades—and the other as someone who is unwittingly currently taking part in an experiment on the 48-hour week, as it is 36 hours since we who serve on the Standing Committee on the Finance Bill last saw our beds.

I urge the House to support Lords amendment No. 29, because everything in it is good sense. Clearly, it reflects a recognition of the changes in the labour market—both the considerable increase in the number of women in the labour market in recent years and the great increase in part-time workers. Incidentally, I look forward to studying the book by the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms Harman), as I am sure it is full of interesting information on that very topic.

The nub of the disagreement between the two sides of the House involves the 20-employee limit. The essence of what I wish to share with the House is what I have heard from employers in my constituency—yes, they are members of the Forum of Private Business. I sometimes think that Opposition Members have had little experience of running small businesses. There is no doubt that small businesses are the source of growth. Larger businesses grow from smaller businesses.

Mr. Miller: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman intends to tell us about his experience as a small business man. Does he provide itemised pay statements for the employees in the small businesses with which he has been involved?

Mr. Brandreth: Yes, indeed. That is a marvellous example of good practice, and we want to encourage it. That is why the requirement is in the Bill. But we want to get the balance right. We do not want to impose compulsorily on small businesses—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] We want to encourage good practice. No doubt, in the fulness of time, more and more small businesses will provide itemised pay statements, but they do not wish to have their hands tied. This is all about getting the balance right. People asked for a listening Government and they

have got one. We listen to the small businesses and we say, "We want to do this; it is good practice. But we also want to enable you to conduct your business in the way that you think best."

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I have been listening to the hon. Gentleman. Is there not a real weakness in his argument, in that it relies on good practice on a voluntary basis? Presumably he, as a small business man, provides itemised pay slips because he is a good business person, he has nothing to fear and he pays his national insurance contributions as he should. The worry about the voluntary system is that those who do not provide the information are those who most need to do so. Surely that is where, in any civilised society, the law has some part to play.

Mr. Brandreth: The whole idea is to extend good practice. That is what Conservative Members want, but Labour Members have made it clear that they would like workers who work fewer than eight hours to be included. The hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) is nodding enthusiastically at the prospect of somebody working for one or two hours a week and being entitled to an itemised pay statement. That is because Labour Members are the friends of bureaucracy and regulation and want to increase the burden. We want to encourage good practice and, at the same time, allow small businesses to work and to grow. This is a small piece of legislation, but it is vital and I thoroughly commend it to the House.

Mr. Frank Field: I want to support the argument advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin) and in so doing to add two further lines of argument.

I want to develop the line that the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) has just taken, in which he accused Labour Members of paying no attention to what is happening in the labour market. The changes that my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East advanced were based on what is happening in that market. An increasing number of people are active in the Labour party —the labour market, rather; thank God the two are not comparable, or the economy would be totally down the drain—and are part of what is called the flexible labour market. If we are not to store up trouble for those people and huge bills for taxpayers later, it is important that we ensure that minimum services are given and contributions are both paid and recorded.

The argument advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East—that we should be concerned about both the cut-off point for employers with fewer than 20 employees and the hours cut-off point—is crucial. When we look back on our working lives, let alone those of our grandchildren, we will be amazed at the number of people who at some time worked for a few hours and at other times worked hours more like what we would call a full-time week. If, during those working lives, we are to build up contributions to the national insurance fund and, more important, as time goes by, to universalise private pension arrangements, we should ensure that all employees are safely linked in to building up wealth, from which they can draw on later in their lives.

I hope that our argument, and the amendments that we have tabled, are seen as part of a broader argument for changes in, for example, national insurance contributions. At the moment, the labour market is rigged. As Mrs. Thatcher once said, however, "You can't buck the market." If employers' national insurance contributions are not required below £56 a week, we cannot be surprised when there is a massive extension in part-time jobs.

I hope that Labour Members will increasingly call for employers' contributions to start at the first pound of earnings—not because we want to increase the amount of money raised by national insurance contributions, but because it is important to have a level playing field, whereby employers and employees can work out how many hours of work are offered and how many hours people want to work, rather than have a financial incentive that gears job creation to part-time jobs.

If we take seriously the argument of the hon. Member for City of Chester—that we should be concerned with developments in the labour market—we will see him in our Lobby tonight. Changes in the labour market and an increase in the number of what are called "flexible workers" make our argument carry that much more force and leave the Government in some difficulty trying to defend their position.

If the Government genuinely believe in not rigging markets and in level playing fields, workers' rights should begin with the first hour of earnings. The standards that the hon. Member for City of Chester applies in his own business will, we hope, be applied by all employers. The bad employers would apply those standards because the law compels them to do so and the good employers—who, we hope, are the vast majority—would have no difficulty in fulfilling that requirement because they already do so.

6.15 pm

That is one of the arguments that I wish to advance. The other is about minimum standards. The Government have knocked away minimum standards in our society. We have seen that with the mutilation and abolition of wages councils and the abolition of the fair wages resolution and of security for people against being unfairly sacked. If I were speaking to members of the Tory party, they would have no difficulty in understanding my argument, but in the past 15 years a group of 19th-century liberals have climbed aboard the Tory party, thrown the crew overboard and steered the ship in a completely different direction.

There must be minimum standards. The body politic and the economic arrangements of a society are like the complicated human body, which needs checks and balances; throwing them away results in some very distorted positions and gross exploitation of the weakest members of the labour market. I hope that, as we think about the next election, when we recognise that we are living in an economy governed by a social market, to which we have no fundamental alternative, we make a case against the unacceptable faces of a social market economy as run by this Government.

Guaranteeing minimum standards for people at the bottom of the pile is one feature. Therefore, I very much support the arguments that were advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East. In so doing, I merely wish to correct the record, because in some debates on the Bill it has been suggested that I am against minimum wage proposals. That is untrue. I have cautioned my party about the employment consequences of a minimum wage—of setting it at an absurd level in the early stages—and about the need for it to be very low, for it to be offset by reductions in national insurance contributions,

and to link it to an industrial strategy for training and investment to increase productivity. I have not made a stand against a minimum wage, but have cautioned as to how we implement it.

If Labour is successfully to challenge the unacceptable faces of a social market economy, it must come out very clearly in favour of laying down minimum standards, not in a way that kills the goose that lays the golden egg but with the confidence of a party that knows that all these questions are matters of balance and feels that it has that balance correct. Tonight, we can take one small step against the unacceptable faces that have driven wage rates down to less than £2 for workers in the Birkenhead jobcentre. That is not acceptable. We want counter-measures to tackle that.

As we approach a much more flexible economy, it is crucial that employers do not get their employees on the cheap—that employers do not deny them their rights to have their national insurance contributions paid and to become part of a universalise provision of private pensions. We must ensure that those contributions are paid, because if we do not, and if the Government get their way, that failure will put that much extra cost on taxpayers and welfare in the future.

I hope that the Labour party increasingly accepts a reform of welfare which sees the budget being reduced because we have been so successful in knitting people into jobs and into wealth that comes from work and from owning wealth. If that happened, there would be less need for people to draw on what we have traditionally thought of as the welfare state. If that is to be our approach, the House will oppose the Government today. They are moving away from that situation and are increasingly putting the costs back on the employees, and especially those who are least able to bear that cost.

I welcome the decision of my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East to divide the House. We will divide the House tonight on an aspect of the unacceptable faces of the social market economy. Those unacceptable faces are now the big divide between the two major parties in the Chamber.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): The Government's attitude never ceases to amaze me. I find it incredible that we are talking about people as if they were a motor car that was being repaired. Many hon. Members will have had their car fixed and then checked the bill. The bill is itemised, so that the customer can see how much he is being charged per hour for the fitter and the electrician and how much for oil and for the parts. It is not difficult. We live in a high-tech world where computers are an everyday thing, and where schoolkids probably know more about computers than any hon. Member.

Has any young person been asked how he feels about the proposal? The Government seem to have asked the Confederation of British Industry and the Federation of Small Businesses. I do not know one young person under the age of 20 who has been approached by the Government and asked about the abolition of anything that relates to young people. They have been taken out of the wage councils and have lost some of their rights to protection. There is now a suggestion that they will not get even an itemised wages slip. That is quite incredible.

Despite the problems that the country faces, the Government are spending time supporting a Lords amendment such as this. I find that lamentable. Young people in my constituency want the right to get a job, to get training and to get a full education that will take them into a decent arena of work. Perhaps the Minister would agree with me. I know plenty of young people who would like the Minister's job, and would probably do a far better job than he does. In fact, I guarantee that nearly every 20-year-old in my constituency could do a far better job in coming forward with employment rights to suit the needs and requirements of young people than the Minister.

I am trying to use my English accent rather than my Glasgow accent so that the Minister will understand. The nitpicking of the Government is unbelievable. The Bill is about trade union reform and employment rights, and we are saying to young folk under 20 that they will not get their rights. The Government want employers not to bother telling their young employees what their deductions are. They do not want to tell the young people what they are earning. Those young people may be working for eight, 10 or 16 hours and they will not be told what they have earned.

We heard from the Government how many part-time workers are contributing to the country's economy. Are we going to treat them like a lump of stone to be shoved about, or are we going to treat them like human beings? I resent the Government treating our people like cannon fodder to be blown about and to be treated in such a fashion. The House is not talking about animals; it is talking about people. Surely our people have the right to be treated in a dignified fashion. If they work for an hour, they are entitled to know what their wages are for that hour. They are entitled to get a pay slip.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Normally, the hon. Gentleman and I get on extremely well in debates such as this. Could I draw to his attention the fact that we are discussing a Government amendment which, precisely as he asks, gives people the right to an itemised pay statement? The Opposition amendment seeks to amend our amendment to remove the limit that has been set to exclude small employers. That is the issue. I should not want the hon. Gentleman to be put in a position where Conservative Members might decide that his job could be better done by a 20-year-old as well.

Mr. Graham: I am convinced that literally hundreds of thousands of young people under the age of 20 could do a far superior job. I am here to give the House the benefit of my experience in a way that is fitting, given that my constituents sent me to this place.

Could the Minister say why the matter has been discussed with employers only? Why has it not been discussed with young people? The Government never discuss anthing with the young people of this country, and they are treated like cannon fodder. In a war such as there was in the Gulf, it would not be long before the young people were in the front line and lying down and dying for this country. The Government would demand that they go to war.

Why do not the Government recognise the right of young people to an itemised wage bill? Why should not young people see a breakdown of their pay? I know of plenty of duff employers. I know of some savage employers who have gone bankrupt and out of business. Some are hiding in Cyprus or Spain and did not pay any tax for their employees. I know some kids who are waiting

for their holiday pay. I know people who have waited years for their holiday pay because they did not get it from a bum, bad employer. I have a list of those companies as long as my arm. We can supply the Minister with the list if he wants us to.

I am sick and tired of the House debating the subject of young people without any real consideration for their thoughts. We are turning out some of the biggest bunch of old fogeys in the western world. Unfortunately, when I sit in the House, I realise that I am an old fogey along with other hon. Members. I have two young sons who do not miss me. When I come home, they ask: "When is the House going to get its act together? Why are there thousands and thousands of their pals on the dole who cannot get work and who want to work? Why are not the young people getting a proper education or proper training?"

I challenged the Minister on the question of training credits for young people. I was told that there were thousands of training credits in my area. Last night, I asked an executive of Scottish Enterprise how many folk were getting the credits. The answer was none. There were six getting credits in Dunbarton and others elsewhere in Scotland. The point is that I got bum information, which was neither suitable nor acceptable to my constituents. If the Minister can get that wrong, he can get the amendment wrong, too.

The other day I got a telephone bill from British Telecom. Have hon. Members seen it? There is an itemised bill—no problem. The customer sees that he has spent 64p here and 54p there, or talked for a minute here and one and a half minutes there. The customer can find out whether his wife has overdone the phone bill—my wife usually says that I have overdone it. If a customer goes to the grocers, or shops at Asda or Tesco, there is an itemised bill. Has the Minister ever been shopping? I go with the wife. The bill shows a pint of milk and a loaf of bread. It tells the customer that he has bought those things and gives him the price of them. There is no problem at all.

Yet the Government tell us that they are helping small business by not giving employees an itemised wages slip. Their heads are in a tin—they are off their nut. That is not the kind of progress that we need. Let us have genuine discussions about employment rights, and no nonsense wasting the time of the House.

6.30 pm

Mr. Michael Clapham (Barnsley, West and Penistone): The statutory right to an itemised pay slip is fundamental. It is something that a worker should expect when he takes employment, no matter how many hours he works. The amendment will not extend that statutory right to tens of thousands of vulnerable people.

Many, if not all, of those workers will be women who have been forced into part-time employment because of economic circumstances. They have had to take a few hours work to earn a little more money to support the family, to buy a little more for the table and to buy clothes for the children, because, generally, one person in the partnership is out of work.

In these days of mass unemployment, when jobs are hard to come by, many part-time workers will be young people who have been unable to find full-time work and have had to take the first part-time job that comes along.

The people who framed the amendment have little idea how many people might be affected. I said that tens of thousands of people will be affected. My hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin) mentioned 780,000 people.

This morning, in its submission to the Trade and Industry Select Committee, the Federation of Small Businesses said there are as many as 4 million self-employed small business men and 1 million small limited companies. It said that about 97 per cent. of small businesses employ fewer than 20 people, and 91 per cent. employ fewer than 10 people. A great many of those employees will be part-time. If we multiply that figure by 10, we will not be far short of the figure that my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East used—that is, 780,000.

Ms Quin: The 780,000 which my hon. Friend rightly quoted includes those in companies which employ fewer than 20 people who work more than eight hours but fewer than 16 hours. If we take into account those who work fewer than eight hours, we have a figure of 1·25 million. My hon. Friend is absolutely right; a very large number of people are affected.

Mr. Clapham: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for pointing that out. We are talking of more than 1 million workers being affected.

Under this Government, small businesses have been treated rather shabbily. In 1992, for example, the failure rate was almost 63,000. Many employees will have claims against the small businesses that have folded. Those employees will be able to prosecute their claims, because they will have evidence that they were employed, evidence of the hours they worked, and evidence of how much they earned. Without an itemised pay slip, it is unlikely that an employee will be able to prosecute a claim.

The amendment gives a nod and a wink to employers not to keep records. The Government should make it clear that records are necessary and should be kept by small businesses. The Lords amendment is a retrograde step; I ask the House to vote against it and to support the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East.

Ms Ann Coffey (Stockport): No doubt the Minister will respond to our amendment by arguing that the small additional costs that might be incurred by itemising pay slips for employees in firms of fewer than 20 employees will be the straw that breaks the camel's back for some small firms, and will drive them into bankruptcy. The Minister might be interested to hear what representatives of industry, including small businesses and the Confederation of British Industry, have told the Trade and Industry Select Committee about ways of improving the competitiveness and productivity of British industry, so that the hon. Gentleman can be assured that the emphasis on cost is the least of industry's problems and that he can therefore support our amendment.

Among the problems that have been identified, particularly by small business, are the way that VAT is collected; the attitude of the banks; difficulties in obtaining loans; the tax system, and particularly how it affects small businesses; the lack of an overall structure; infrastructure, including education; and the difficulty with training and transport. This morning, the representatives who attended the Select Committee did not touch upon any costs

[Ms Ann Coffey]

relating to labour. That has not been identified to us as a major problem, although representatives went on at length about some of the factors that I have drawn to the Minister's attention.

It is becoming clear that the countries that do better than us and have more productive industries than ours —for example, Japan and Germany—have a fundamentally different attitude to their employees. That is reflected in employment and trade union rights and the bargaining process in respect of wage settlements. The reason for those countries' higher productivity is that their work forces have been managed properly and involved in firms' decisions. They feel that they have a long-term future and are therefore willing to work harder for their companies. That has led to higher productivity and higher-quality goods.

That point is not difficult to understand. The Minister knows that anybody who is managed well will respond more favourably. I am sure that the Ministers whom the Prime Minister treats well behave much better than the Ministers whom he does not treat well. That is a fact of life; it is plain common sense. Indeed, this morning, the CBI acknowledged that there has been a problem with the lack of management skills in industry, and that we must involve people more. Only by doing so can we use the talents and skills of our people and stop the desperate malaise in British industry. I draw that to the Minister's attention because the issue of itemised pay slips, although small in itself, is important in recognising employees' rights.

A Conservative Member talked about the odd job of a cleaning lady. It is not an odd job at all. Without women doing those jobs, the country would collapse. The problem is that no value is placed on that work. Itemised pay slips for those workers is a way of giving the message that they are important. It is up to the Government to show leadership. If the Government do not show leadership by saying that people and their jobs are important, we cannot expect the management of British industry to give that message. The Government have a chance to give that message by supporting our amendment. Cost did not prevent the Government from asking local authorities to send out itemised poll tax bills to all residents. Local authorities are a service industry. The Government asked local authorities to do that because they thought that it was right and proper that taxpayers should be aware of what they were being asked to pay.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Lady is making the same mistake as the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham). As a result of our amendment, large employers will, for the first time, be required to give itemised pay statements to employees who work a small number of hours. What is at issue is small businesses, so an analogy with itemised statements being required by large employers such as local authorities is not a fair one.

Ms Coffey: The Minister should recall that, at the beginning of my speech, I anticipated his argument about extending that right to firms with less than 20 employees. I anticipated that his argument would relate to cost. I have not misunderstood the amendment. My point is that, if something is right and the Government think that it is right, regardless of the cost—for example, to send itemised poll tax bills to all residents in a borough—the argument about cost is not one that the Minister can use at all because the issue is about rights. I see that the Minister now understands.

Millions of pounds have been spent on sending out glossy brochures about the citizens charter and aspects of the health service. That has cost the service industries money, but the Government did that because they thought that it was right. My point is that, if it is right to send itemised pay slips to employees, it is right to send them to all employees.

The Government have a fundamental problem in distinguishing rights from costs. There is a great strength of feeling in the United Kingdom that the contribution that people make is not valued and their rights are balanced by the Government time and time again on factors relating to cost. The contribution that people make is important, and they should not be denied basic rights simply because of the cost.

6.45 pm

Mr. Miller: When my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin) was speaking, I noticed that the Government Whip had his handkerchief out. I thought that he was bursting into tears at the thought of having to provide an itemised pay statement for his valet, or whatever.

The crux of the argument is the question: why should any worker not be entitled to an itemised pay statement? The Government bluntly said that it would be too costly. Indeed, in Committee on 14 January, the Minister of State suffered from the needle being stuck more than once, because he repeated himself three times in columns 435-36 when referring to the additional cost imposed on employers.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) made an important point that followed the theme adopted by my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin) in terms of legal cases. My hon. Friend referred to the evidence submitted by the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery referred to a number of legal cases in his professional background that stemmed from companies with a small number of employees.

Last night, I advised the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on an issue that affects her responsibility, which spills into this debate. It is ironic that she held the position of Secretary of State for Employment previously. It is a great pity that the Minister has chosen to ignore the evidence provided to the Committee by NACAB.

In a document sent to me today, NACAB says that evidence shows that itemised pay slips can save a lot of time later if disputes arise. That is exactly along the lines of the point made by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery. For example, if an employee thinks that an employer has not paid the correct amount, made an illegal deduction from his pay or not been paying tax, it is the experience of the NACAB that some employers clearly flout their obligations under the law by not deducting pay-as-you-earn tax and national insurance contributions. Other employers may make the deductions but not pay the money to the Inland Revenue.

In both cases, that is revenue lost to the Exchequer and deficient national insurance contribution records affect

future benefit entitlements. The National Audit Office reported that there was large-scale under-collection of national insurance contributions.

If those issues are not ones in which the Government should be interested, given the perilous state of the nation's finances, I do not know what are. It is ironic that the Government should choose to ignore that, from the Treasury point of view and that of individual citizens who are affected by some of the examples to which my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East referred.

There are many other examples. A citizens advice bureau in South Wales reports a client who is employed by a nursing home. Her contract states that, if her pay exceeds the lower limit for national insurance contributions, she may receive store gift vouchers, which are exempt from national insurance. That is illegal. I am not entirely sure that having a pay statement would mitigate that, but it would go a long way to helping the employee to argue her legal rights if the matter went to court.

A citizens advice bureau in Devon reports a client who was paid £23 a night to work in a residential care home, despite being told that she would be paid £24 a night. When she complained, she was told that it was to keep her payments below the national insurance level. She insisted on full payment, and her next wage packet had £6·50 deducted for national insurance contributions. As her wage was below the level for national insurance contributions, the deductions were clearly wrong. If she had had documentary proof of that in the form of an itemised pay statement, she would have been in a strong position to challenge her employer in court.

I shall give the Government some advice about the way in which to encourage small businesses to think positively about this matter, and I shall do so in two ways. One way to encourage small businesses is by the use of modern technology—I say this as someone who has some knowledge of the subject.

It is interesting that the training and enterprise council in my area has sent out 10,000 attractively produced glossy leaflets showing its successes and activities. I do not criticise the TEC for many of the activities in which it has engaged, but, I criticise the use of money to produce the glossy literature. That money could have been used to train small employers in how better to utilise modern technology in their industries to ensure that such simple things can be provided as a matter of course.

Any company worth its salt keeps records. It is more efficient to keep records on a computer database than to do so manually. The Secretary of State will know Chester, Ellesmere Port and Warrington TEC—CEWTEC—and will doubtless praise many of its activities, but I am sure that he will agree that it could direct some resources towards helping to train small businesses in how to improve their record-keeping, administration and efficiency. Part of that process could be to encourage small businesses, many of which use computers, to utilise facilities that are available at minimal cost to provide statements to their employees.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): From his experience, can the hon. Gentleman say how long it would take to prepare an itemised statement?

Mr. Miller: I shall stick to the point that I was making about computerised information, and will refer to manual records later.

A good employer will collate the relevant computerised data, and it would take seconds to produce an itemised statement. If an employer has a well organised database, the stroke of a handful of keys will be all that is necessary to produce the statement. The process can be as quick as that in a well run business—and we are all in favour of encouraging such businesses.

The same arguments can be applied to the question whether there should be an upper limit of 20. The hon. Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) made an important contribution in Committee, and I congratulate her on being positive. I hope that she does not back off one jot from the sentence, which is on record, in which she said:

"As the trend is towards part-time work, especially for women, it is important that everyone who has deductions from pay, and who in future may have to prove them either to the Inland Revenue or to the Benefits Agency, has written proof of those deductions."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee F*, 14 January 1993; c. 434.]

I absolutely agree—"everyone" must mean everyone in a company, irrespective of size. I hope that the hon. Member for Tiverton will support us in the Division Lobby. Why should there be an arbitrary limit on the number of employees in a company?

To return to the issue raised by the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs), even if a very small company cannot justify the few hundred pounds' investment in a personal computer that could be used for other activities, the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) has supplied the ideal solution. A proforma duplicate pad could be used to provide the basic information.

An employer—no matter what size his business—must keep books in some form or another, so to produce information on a carbonised pad would not take any effort. It would require the employer to produce information in an honest, open and accountable way to all those involved—not just the employees, but all the public agencies. Even if the technology in a company extended only to a ballpoint pen, the employer would have the facilities at his disposal to provide the information required.

It is against that background that I believe that the Government have slipped up badly. They had an opportunity to make a major advance and have failed to take it. Therefore, I support my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East in opposing the Lords amendment.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We have had an interesting debate and learnt that the official Opposition policy is to start a paper chase the length and breadth of Britain. Every cleaning lady and part-time handyman will be given a piece of paper by their employers, whether they want it or not.

The Opposition have been thoroughly ungrateful today in the face of the Government's reasonable and responsible response to considered arguments.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): Not true.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman says from a sedentary position that that is not true. I listened to my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) —I am delighted that she has agreed to become my Parliamentary Private Secretary today. It was in no small part due to the part that she played in Committee that my right hon. Friend and I felt that she would be a splendid

[Mr. Forsyth]

addition to the Department. My hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton took the initiative in Committee. The hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) supported the arguments advanced by my hon. Friend.

The hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) is not distinguishing himself today—he is no gentleman. He quoted my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton selectively. He did not quote column 436, where she said in response to my comments:

"I am encouraged by my hon. Friend's comments".

My comments in respect of the amendment were:

"Once again, we are discussing an additional cost being imposed on employers. I am not certain what the costs or the implications would be. We have had no opportunity to discuss the idea with any of the organisations which represent small businesses, which would be affected by the proposal. If my hon. Friend will withdraw the amendment, we can pursue her idea with outside groups which take an interest in these matters, and reach a conclusion."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee F*, 14 January 1993; c. 436.]

That is precisely what we did—we consulted.

Earlier, I was criticised for not consulting. On that occasion we consulted and found that the Confederation of British Industry, the Forum of Private Business and other organisations wanted a cut-off for small firms. That was why we introduced the amendment to improve the law by giving new rights to employees who work a small number of hours. We limited the legislation in terms of the impact on business and introduced it in such a way that any change to the limit can be made by secondary legislation should any Government decide to do so in the future.

That policy marks an advance, and to be faced with Opposition criticism that we have not done enough in a sector where we have done a great deal as a result of discussions in Committee—and done so in double quick time—is harsh.

Mr. Frank Field: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way, and particularly for reminding us that the Government are a listening Government. We applaud the Minister for talking to the CBI and representatives of small businesses before reaching a decision. However, how many low-paid, part-time workers in his constituency did he speak to before coming up with his formula?

Mr. Forsyth: The conversations that I have had with low-paid workers in my constituency showed that receiving itemised pay statements was not at the top of their agenda, where they listed more basic items such as how to improve their employment prospects, deal with housing problems and other such issues. One of the ways of solving such problems is to increase this country's wealth-creating capacity. We shall not achieve that by tying up businesses in red tape, as the hon. Gentleman well knows.

Mr. David Hanson (Delyn): Did the Minister consult his colleagues in the Department of Social Security and in the Benefits Agency? I am worried that many people who will not now have itemised pay slips will not qualify for means-tested benefits and other benefits administered by the Department. What did the DSS have to say about his proposals?

7 pm

Mr. Forsyth: People in the tax system will get their P60s, which provide the information. There is nothing to prevent employers, the vast majority of whom follow best practices in this matter, from providing the information for people whose incomes fall below that. Just for once, the hon. Gentleman should bring himself to welcome a Government proposal and to acknowledge that the position of people employed by firms with more than 20 employees working a small number of hours has been greatly improved. As my hon. Friend the Member for Chester (Mr. Brandreth) said, there must be a balance between the benefits and the costs of the bureaucracy imposed on small businesses.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) said that not many members of the CBI have fewer than 20 employees. He should remember that these small firms are the future large employer members of the CBI, and if they have to spend every waking hour filling in forms and sending out bits of paper, they will never become the larger firms that will provide the jobs of the future.

Mr. Graham: I am not knocking the Government for talking to the CBI—I thought that the Government were in the closet with the CBI all the time, anyway—but I do take issue with the Government over how many employees they may have consulted. Have they spoken to trade unions or youth organisations about their decision? We seem to hear a lot from the Government about small employers, but not much about employees. How will this measure help them?

Mr. Forsyth: I listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman's speech. He said that computers are all around us and that high technology is a fact of life. I suggest that he go and talk to those who own the newsagents, corner shops and small firms in his constituency and ask them to show him their computers which will produce itemised pay statements. He will find that there, as elsewhere in the country, employers with small numbers of employees are struggling under numerous burdens, and they would not thank this House for adding to those burdens at a time when they are working hard to create wealth and to survive in difficult trading conditions.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley) *rose*——

Mr. Forsyth: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has been listening long to our proceedings.

The hon. Member for Stockport (Ms Coffey), who is not now in her place, asked me to bear in mind the importance of competitiveness. She spoke about the evidence given by the CBI and others to the Trade and Industry Select Committee. She at least listens to the voice of business. She said that competitiveness was important and that we ought to learn from Japan, where there was a fundamentally different attitude to employees. I could not agree with her more. The difference between Japan and Europe is that Japanese non-wage labour costs are exactly half those of Europe. Opposition Members should stop coming up with bright ideas to add to the non-wage costs of our employers—especially small employers.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery wanted me to give an assurance that we would monitor the progress of the legislation. The Government monitor every

piece of legislation. I only regret that the hon. and learned Gentleman did not give us credit for having made an advance——

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the Minister mean to say that he has evidence that in Japan pay slips are not given to employees who work part time in industry? I suggest that the vast majority of Japanese employers give computerised pay slips to part-time employees who work less than 16 hours.

Mr. Forsyth: I knew that the Liberals made up their policies as they go along; I did not realise that they did the same when it comes to arguments of this kind. I repeat: the non-wage labour costs of Japan are half those of the European Community, thus giving it a competitive advantage. If the hon. and learned Gentleman and his colleagues had had their way, British non-wage costs would be a good deal higher, as they would have made us sign up to the social chapter and all the other nonsense which will make it much more difficult for Europe to compete with the Japanese and others.

Lords amendments Nos. 29 and 41 represent an advance. I ask the House to support them and to reject the Opposition amendment.

Question put, That the amendment to the Lords amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 255, Noes 281.

Division 290] **[7.05 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*

Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Killedder, Sir James
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Moate, Sir Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope and
Mr. Andrew Mitchell.

Question accordingly negatived.
Lords amendment No. 29 agreed to.

New clause

Lords amendment: No. 30—*Dismissal on ground of assertion to statutory right—*

(".—(1) After section 60 of the 1978 Act (as substituted by section 23 of this Act), there shall be inserted—

"DISMISSAL ON GROUNDS OF ASSERTION OF STATUTORY RIGHT

60A.—(1) The dismissal of an employee by an employer shall be regarded for the purposes of this Part as having been unfair if the reason for it (or, if more than one, the principal reason) was that the employee—

(a) brought proceedings against the employer to enforce a right of his which is a relevant statutory right; or

(b) alleged that the employer had infringed a right of his which is a relevant statutory right.

(2) It is immaterial for the purposes of subsection (1) whether the employee has the right or not and whether it has been infringed or not, but, for that subsection to apply, the claim to the right and that it has been infringed must be made in good faith.

(3) It shall be sufficient for subsection (1) to apply that the employee, without specifying the right, made it reasonably clear to the employer what the right claimed to have been infringed was.

(4) The following statutory rights are relevant for the purposes of this section, namely—

(a) any right conferred by—

(i) this Act, or

(ii) the Wages Act 1986,

for which the remedy for its infringement is by way of a complaint or reference to an industrial tribunal;

(b) the right conferred by section 49 (minimum notice);

(c) the rights conferred by the following provisions of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consoldiation) Act 1992, namely, sections 68, 86, 146, 168, 169 and 170 (deductions from pay, union activities and time off)."

(2) In section 59 of the 1978 Act (dismissal on ground of redundancy), in subsection (2) (inserted by section 23(2) of this Act), after the word "(e)" there shall be inserted the words "or 60A(1) (read with (2) and (3))".

(3) In section 64 of the 1978 Act (qualifying period for right not to be unfairly dismissed), in subsection (4) (inserted by section 23(3) of this Act), after the word "(e)" there shall be inserted the words "or 60A(1) (read with (2) and (3))".")

Read a Second time.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): With this it will be convenient to consider Lords amendments Nos. 42, 59, 60 and 64.

Mr. Forsyth: Government amendment No. 30, with which are grouped the associated minor and technical amendments, is an important addition to the Bill's provisions, making a further significant enhancement to employees' individual rights.

The new clause was first introduced by the Government in Committee in another place to fulfil a commitment that I gave, I think from memory, to the hon. Members for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) and for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). We had undertaken to introduce a measure giving employees, regardless of their length of service or hours of work, protection against being unfairly dismissed for seeking to enforce the right to a written statement of main employment particulars. We had also said that we would consider the extent to which similar protection might be extended to employees seeking to enforce other statutory employment rights.

We concluded that the new provision should be comprehensive, applying in respect of all statutory employment protection rights. The rights in question are: all rights conferred by either the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 or the Wages Act 1986 for which the remedy for infringement is by way of a complaint or a reference to an industrial tribunal; the right to a minimum period of notice; and all the rights which an employee may exercise against his or her employer under the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.

The protection will apply where the employee's dismissal was on the ground that he or she had brought proceedings against the employer to enforce one of these rights and also where it was on the ground that he or she had alleged that the employer had infringed such a right. The protection will also apply where the employee was selected for redundancy on the same grounds.

It will be unnecessary for the employee actually to have made detailed reference to the right in question, as long as he or she made it reasonably clear to the employer what that right was. It will also be immaterial whether the employee had actually qualified for the right and whether the right had been infringed, provided that he or she had acted in good faith in seeking to assert it. I am sure that the Opposition will agree that that is watertight.

As I am sure all hon. Members will agree, dismissal of an employee for seeking in good faith to enforce his or her statutory employment protection rights is wholly unjustifiable. I am confident that few employers would ever contemplate acting in such an irresponsible manner. However, the new clause, which will make all such dismissals automatically unfair, will provide comprehensive new protection for individual employees against any misguided employer who might act in this way.

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): I welcome this generous amendment, which more than fulfils the commitments given by the Minister in Committee. We are pleased that the amendment does not merely place a duty on the employee to show that his rights were impeded. Irrespective of whether it was later shown that he did not have a right to ask for information because of a technical problem, the important issue is that the employee acted in good faith. It is good that, for once, in the Bill the benefit of the doubt is given to the employee.

The measure does not deal with whether an industrial tribunal can order reinstatement or award compensation. However, I should be ruled out of order if I started to discuss that and the Minister would think I was being churlish. In any case we discussed the matter in Committee.

Question put and agreed to.
Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

New clause

Lords amendment: No. 31—*Application of 1978 Act to service in armed forces—*

(".—(1) In section 138 of the 1978 Act (application of Act to Crown employment) for subsection (3) (service in the armed forces excepted) there shall be substituted—

"(3) This section applies to service as a member of the naval, military or air forces of the Crown but only

in accordance with section 138A and it applies also to employment by any association established for the purposes of Part VI of the Reserve Forces Act 1980."

(2) After section 138, there shall be inserted—

"*Application of Act to armed forces.*

138A.—(1) The provisions of this Act which apply, by virtue of section 138, to service as a member of the naval, military or air forces of the crown are—

Part I;
in Part II, sections 19 to 22 and 31A;
Part III;
in Part IV, section 53;
Part V, except sections 57A and 80;
Part VIII; and
this Part.

(2) Her Majesty may, by Order in Council,—

(a) amend subsection (1) above by making additions to, or omissions from, the provisions for the time being specified in that subsection by an Order under this subsection; and

(b) make any provision apply to service as a member of the naval, military or air forces of the Crown subject to such exceptions and modifications as may be specified in the Order.

(3) Subject to subsection (5) below, modifications made under subsection (2) above may include provision precluding the making of a complaint or reference to any industrial tribunal unless the person aggrieved has availed himself of the service procedures for the redress of complaints applicable to him.

(4) Where modifications include the provision authorised by subsection (3) above the Order in Council shall also include provision designed to secure that the service procedures for the redress of complaints result in a determination, or what is to be treated under the Order as a determination, in sufficient time to enable a complaint or reference to be made to an industrial tribunal.

(5) No provision shall be made by virtue of subsection (3) above which has the effect of substituting, for any period specified as the normal period for a complaint or reference on any matter to an industrial tribunal, a period longer than six months.

(6) No recommendation shall be made to Her Majesty to make an Order in Council under subsection (2) above unless a draft of the Order has been laid before Parliament and approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament.

(7) In this section—

"the normal period for a complaint or reference", in relation to any matter within the jurisdiction of an industrial tribunal, means the period specified in the relevant enactment as the period within which the complaint or reference must be made, disregarding any provision permitting an extension of that period at the discretion of the tribunal; and

"the service procedures for the redress of complaints" means the procedures, excluding those which relate to the making of a report on a complaint to Her Majesty, referred to in sections 180 and 181 of the Army Act 1955, sections 180 and 181 of the Air Force Act 1955 and section 130 of the Naval Discipline Act 1957.'")

Read a Second time.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) for his comments on the previous amendment. I am sure that he and his colleagues will also welcome this new clause, which will considerably improve the rights of members of the armed forces to enjoy employment protection measures equivalent to those that are enjoyed by civilian employees.

It has always been recognised that members of the armed forces are in a special employment position, and that measures applying to civilian employees may well be inappropriate. This is why service in the armed forces has up to now been excluded from coverage by the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978, by virtue of section 138(3). This subsection provides that subsection (1), which applies many of the Act's provisions to Crown employees, does not apply to those in the armed forces. However, in this day and age, such a blanket exclusion is unnecessary and unjustified. The new clause brings the provisions up to date. It applies to the armed forces almost the same list of provisions as apply to Crown servants.

Nevertheless, it is clear that modifications will need to be made to the provisions to make them compatible with the special considerations that necessarily apply to the services. Therefore, the clause contains powers to enable my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to make an order providing that internal procedures will need to be exhausted before service men and service women can take a complaint to an industrial tribunal and make any other necessary adaptations.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): I have a special responsibility for defence for the Opposition and I welcome this new clause. It has been tabled because of cases of discrimination, especially against pregnant women. I hope that there will be no repeat of the recent case of an RAF sergeant, a skilled technician, who, although she was not dismissed when she had twins, was told that she would not be given housing accommodation and that if she was posted abroad and her children went with her they would not be given education or medical facilities. She was also told that if her children stayed in this country boarding school allowances would not be payable. That was discrimination of the worst kind.

I understand that pressure was one of the reasons for the Government altering the Bill. Another reason is the EC directive, which would probably force the Government to accept contracts of employment. The debate in the other place was short. Will people in the armed forces be allowed a written statement of employment, an itemised pay statement and maternity leave? Will they be given a written statement of reasons for dismissal and will they be allowed the right to claim unfair dismissal and the right to go to an industrial tribunal?

I understand that the clause precludes members of the armed forces from becoming members of a trade union. For that reason, it is important to place on record the rights that the new clause will extend to members of the armed forces. Those rights need to be spelt out in black and white and I hope that the Minister can state the exact meaning of the new clause.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman has raised a number of detailed questions. I am grateful to him; I share his concern about, for instance, the rights of women in the armed services who become pregnant.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about certain specific rights. The amendment replaces section 138(3) with a new subsection which will apply to members of the armed forces, relating to the rights specified in new subsection (1) —that is, rights to written statements of the main terms and conditions of employment, as amended to reflect, among other things, the requirement of the EC proof of employment directive. Those terms and conditions are itemised pay statements, the right to be paid when under medical supervision, time off for ante-natal care, maternity rights as amended by the Bill to implement the pregnant

workers directive, a written statement of the reason for dismissal, a right not to be unfairly dismissed and resolution of disputes by an industrial tribunal.

7.30 pm

I have said that access to an industrial tribunal will be limited until the internal procedures have been followed —although there is a further safeguard in the form of a six-month time limit. Subsections (2)(a) and (b) of new section 138A provide that the provisions specified in subsection (1) may be added to, removed or modified by Order in Council.

The hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew), who probably knows more than I do about the details of arrangements for the armed services, will be aware that their members already receive itemised pay statements. The Ministry of Defence is reviewing the policy that denies married quarters and boarding-school allowances to unmarried parents; I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is pleased about that, as I am.

Peace has broken out in our consideration of these Lords amendments. I commend Lords amendment No. 31 to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 29

AMENDMENTS OF TRANSFER OF UNDERTAKINGS REGULATIONS

Lords amendment: No. 32, in page 47, line 10, at end insert—

("( ) in Regulation 5 (effect of transfer on contracts of employment, etc)—

(a) in paragraph (1), at the beginning, there shall be inserted the words "Except where objection is made under paragraph (4A) below,";

(b) in paragraph (2) after the words "paragraph (1) above there shall be inserted the words "but subject to paragraph (4A) below,";

(c) after paragraph (4), there shall be inserted—

"(4A) Paragraphs (1) and (2) above shall not operate to transfer his contract of employment and the rights, powers, duties and liabilities under or in connection with it if the employee informs the transferor or the transferee that he objects to becoming employed by the transferee.

(4B) where an employee so objects the transfer of the undertaking or part in which he is employed shall operate so as to terminate his contract of employment with the transferor but he shall not be treated, for any purpose, as having been dismissed by the transferor."; and

(d) in paragraph (5), for the words "Paragraph (1) above is" there shall be substituted the words "Paragraphs (1) and (4A) above are".")

Mr. Galbraith: I beg to move, as an amendment to the Lords amendment, amendment (a), in line 19, leave out

'not be treated, for any purpose'

and insert

'be treated, for all purposes'.

I fear that peace broke out for only a short time and that we are about to engage in battle again. The Minister and his hon. Friend do not like that idea at all; it frightens them. We are about to discuss the aspect of the Bill that the Minister and the Government probably hate most—the question of the European acquired rights directive on the transfer of engagement. It is more commonly known as TUPE, or the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1991.

The Government have always opposed the directive. They have always tried to cover up its significance and have attempted to fiddle the law in order to do so. When they were caught, instead of saying, "It's a fair cop, guv," their line was, "We never did anything. We did not steal the car; we were just borrowing it. If they wanted it back, they could have had it back at any time—honest, m'lud. We were not trying to mislead the public in any way." According to the Government, their proposals were always intended to apply to competitive tendering. We are now dealing with an amendment to the regulation involved.

The amendment was prompted by a case in the European Court of Justice. It is known as the Kastikas case. I hope that I have pronounced that correctly; I understood the Minister when he said that many a mickle makes a muckle, but my Greek is not quite up to his lowland Scots. *[Interruption.]* The Minister has just corrected my pronunciation, demonstrating that he has a grasp of Greek as well as lowland Scots. That is splendid. He had a proper Scottish education: if hon. Members are in any doubt about that, let me tell them that he attended Arbroath high school. That good start was followed by a retrograde step, in that the Minister then went to St. Andrews university; but those of us who went to superior Scottish universities appreciate that some folk who cannot get into them will end up at St. Andrews.

The Kastikas case demonstrated that, when an undertaking is transferred from one employer to another, no one employed by the transferor is obliged to have the contract transferred to the employee. That surprised me, and I gather that it surprised many other people. We had always assumed that, in the event of a transfer of engagement, all contracts of employment were transferred. Not so, said the European Court:

"If the Directive . . . allows an employee to remain in employment with a new employer on the same conditions as those agreed with the transferor"—

this is important—

"it cannot be interpreted as obliging the employee to continue his employment relationship with the transferee.

[Mr. Galbraith]

Such an obligation would undermine the fundamental rights of the employee who must be free to choose his employer and cannot be obliged to work for an employer."

That important first part of the Court's judgment established that the individual had a fundamental right not to be compelled to work for an employer and that the contract could therefore not be considered transferable under the directive.

The judgment stated that the provisions

"do not prevent an employee from objecting to the transfer of his contract of employment or of his employment relationship."

The court then dealt with what is effectively the crux of the dispute that we are having today:

"In such cases, it is for the Member States to determine the fate of the contract of employment or of the employment relationship."

The judgment has two essential parts. First, it states that the employee can object: he is under no obligation to transfer. However, what happens to the contract of employment is then a matter for the member state alone. No decision has been made about that, so it is up to the Government to table the necessary amendment. They were given the opportunity to clarify the law, but once again they have chosen not to side with the employee. Most people would have expected them to do so; after all, the employee is at a disadvantage. It is the employer who triggers the change in employment. The amendment, however, gives the advantage to the employer yet again. Whenever they are given the choice, the Government side with the employer.

The Government have said that the employee has the right to object, but if that happens, what was described in the other place as a depth charge or nuclear explosion will be brought into play: the employee will instantly be considered to have been dismissed.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: What is at issue is this: if an employee decides not to transfer to the new employer, he is held to have resigned. The hon. Gentleman is arguing that he should be paid redundancy money. Is he really suggesting that, in the event of a transfer from the public to the private sector, the employee should be able to claim redundancy payment and then reapply for the job the following day? What protection would there be? Is that the evenhanded approach that the hon. Gentleman is advocating?

Mr. Galbraith: The Minister should have thought about that before tabling the amendment. That is the problem of tabling new amendments at short notice.

The amendment raises various issues. What rights should be available to employees? What redundancy rights should there be and what rights should employees have to go to an industrial tribunal? What rights should they have to payment in lieu of notice and should they have the right to be given due notice? We may wish to discuss those issues, but it is clear that none of those rights prevails under the Government's amendment.

Before a transfer is made, an employee has the right to notice of dismissal, payment in lieu of dismissal and all the other associated rights, but if he objects to the transfer all his rights are lost because, under the amendment,

"he shall not be treated, for any purpose, as having been dismissed".

Our amendment seeks to retain the rights that the employee had before the transfer. It would not give the employee the right to be employed for ever by the employer. We are not suggesting that, but simply that the employee should retain the rights that he had before the transfer. The employer can still dismiss the employee, but the employee will have the right to notice, to payment in lieu of notice, to redundancy, and the right to go to an industrial tribunal. The Minister may say that it would not be suitable to retain some of those rights, and we can discuss that, but it is clear that under the Government's amendment employees who do not transfer will have no rights whatsoever.

Mr. Forsyth: I do not want to disturb the hon. Gentleman's train of thought, but the employee does have rights. He has the right to retain his employment and move into employment with the new employer. The hon. Gentleman is suggesting that, if the employee decides not to transfer to the new employer and retain the rights that he has accrued, he should not be treated as if he had resigned and that he should be given redundancy payment. Given that the employee is not being required to lose his job, it is difficult to understand the hon. Gentleman's argument that that would be a legitimate position.

Mr. Galbraith: The Minister has failed to understand that the employee is no longer under any obligation. He should remember that it is the employer who triggers the necessity for the employee to choose whether or not to transfer. If the employer makes that decision—and the European Court recognised that the employee is under no obligation to transfer—what rights should be retained by an employee who chooses not to transfer? Under the Government's proposed amendment, the employee loses all rights; he retains the right not to transfer, but he then has no rights whatsoever. Our amendment seeks to retain some rights for that employee.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): It is time to clear up this whole TUPE business, as the truth has not been told. Labour's proposal is ridiculous. The hon. Gentleman is suggesting that someone who is not redundant should be regarded as redundant, that someone who, through the generosity and good will of the European Community is guaranteed the same job with the same pay and the same working arrangements, working in the same place, should be treated as redundant. Surely the Labour party, which has a splendid record of fighting for working people, cannot regard as redundant someone who is not redundant at all.

Mr. Galbraith: I do not agree, although we may wish to discuss that issue. However, other rights apart from the right to redundancy payment are also involved. The right to notice of termination of employment and the right to payment in lieu of notice would also be lost. In other words, an employee would go from having certain rights to having absolutely none at all. We may wish to discuss what rights are available to that individual. Some rights may be inappropriate, but it is clear that, as a result of a change in the working relationship triggered by the employer, absolutely no rights are available to the employee and that cannot be acceptable. That is what we seek to amend.

Mr. Graham: Last night we discussed the fact that some employers were bribing workers not to be members of trade unions. If I were an employer and another company

was buying out my company, I would not expect my staff to want to transfer because they would have to accept a reduction in pay. Many people would end up working for employers who were hostile to their fully held union beliefs and would not wish to work for such companies.

7.45 pm

Mr. Galbraith: I thank my hon. Friend, who made his point in his usual inimitable style.

Mr. Clapham: Is my hon. Friend aware that the situation that he describes appertains to the coal industry? If a colliery surface is privatised and sold to a new company, employees previously employed by the British Coal Corporation receive the opportunity of accepting redundancy. They are paid money in lieu of notice and then, if they wish, they are taken on by the new employer.

Mr. Galbraith: These issues certainly merit further discussion. I understand that the Government introduced the measure to deal with the Kastikis case and therefore they probably had less time than usual. However, it raises a number of issues.

Our interpretation is that the amendment removes from the employee every right that he or she has. Perhaps the Minister, who shakes his head, can say whether or not an employee who refuses to transfer still has the right to notice of dismissal and payment in lieu of notice. Finally, when is it considered to be dismissal? Is it when the employee signs an undertaking saying that he does not wish to transfer, or is it when the engagements have been transferred?

Given the opportunity to confer rights on individuals, once again the Government have failed. I understand their hostility to TUPE. I well remember that, in Committee, the Minister used to speak through clenched teeth and explain to his Back Benchers who were up in arms that, no matter what his personal feelings were, he could not alter European law.

It was probably one of the saddest moments in the Minister's political career. It was the bottom, and he has had some pretty low points. For example, he accused the National Federation of Women's Institutes of being a Marxist organisation. These poor women in Stirling, Callander and Doune making jam and buttering scones on behalf of charities were all labelled Marxist subversives. They were shaking in their boots in Callander.

Under the amendment, do employees lose all rights when they refuse to transfer and when are they considered to have made that refusal?

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): The Opposition's amendment is one of the most ridiculous that I have ever seen. The clear implication of the hard-fought-for right to compensation for redundancy was that someone made redundant was entitled to compensation. We are talking here about a situation in which a new employer takes over a service. If the new employer, through the generosity of the EC, is obliged to offer the same job, without any change in working conditions, even in the room in which he works, without any change in wages, without change in anything, there is no way in which that employee can be declared redundant. The Opposition's amendment is ridiculous because in it they are asking for a special category of redundancy to be given to people who are not redundant at all.

But it is not that which worries me so much as the Government's proposal and the Lords amendment, not because I object to it—it seems quite sensible, particularly the new paragraph (4B)—but because I am concerned about whether the Government are right.

The only point that I want to make, which I hope the Minister will think about, is that when we look back we see that two things have happened. First, the Government have been consistently wrong in their judgments or assessments of the law. Secondly, the most shameful cloak of secrecy has been thrown over the TUPE business. The Government have consistently sought to try to hide the iniquitous policies of the EC, the way in which our freedom is being taken away and the way in which industry, commerce and jobs are being undermined.

That is clear, as we see time and again. Perhaps most obvious is the fact that we are not allowed to table questions on the size of the piles of food in the EC. All kinds of things are being covered up, but on this issue I make two points. First, because of the Government's cloak of secrecy, there has been a deliberate attempt not to tell employers what is happening. Privatised employers feel most upset about the fact that the long infraction proceedings initiated by the European Commission were not made public by the Government, and employers and local authorities went ahead with arrangements, making contracts and offering out services, without being aware that all the time Jacques Delors and his friends were nibbling away at the matter, with serious results.

The second point on which I hope that the Minister will give me some guidance concerns what will happen to the local councils that privatised their services many years ago. Southend is an obvious example. We privatised services, we believe to the benefit of the ratepayers, although that is a question of judgment, and saved money. But whether we were clever or stupid, the Minister will be well aware of the judgment on the Eastbourne case, as a result of which it seems that backdated responsibility will be put on the councils or the employers to pay massive sums of money to the employees concerned. Not only will they have to make redundancy payments to workers who were made redundant at the time of privatisation, but they will have to compensate them for loss of earnings as well.

Eastbourne and Southend sacked all the workers, brought in a new employer who appointed new people, no doubt with better working conditions—in Southend the wages rose over a period—but there were far fewer people doing more work. Now, having done what the Government told them to do, they find that they are faced with horrendous liabilities. What we in Southend would like to know, what Eastbourne would like to know, is who will pay. We are not clear whether the employer or the council will have to pay. We understand that it will be the employer who has to pay, which will put many good employers out of business through no fault of their own. If that happens, it will be serious.

I should like the Minister to give advice, particularly to friends of mine who pop into the House of Commons from Scotland from time to time, on who will be responsible for that and what will happen. The Minister will be well aware from the activities of the clause 26 group—a group of private employers—that they feel let down. They did what was legal and what the Government told them to do. They did a good job and now they find that they are being clobbered retrospectively through no fault of their own.

[Sir Teddy Taylor]

It would be okay if the Government said, "Look, we are terribly sorry, but Jacques Delors has mucked all this up. We don't control the EC. They did it." But the fact is that for two years the Government were being pursued by the EC Commission. They knew it would probably go funny, they did not tell the employers, new contracts were made and a great loss was involved.

Secondly, what the blazes is the Government's advice now? I have seen the advice given by the Secretary of State for the Environment to local authorities. Let me read one sentence of the advice given to that splendid council in a place called Liverpool which sought the advice of the Conservative Government. It was told:

"Mr. Farrell of the TGWU is not incorrect in suggesting that the TUPE will require any future contractor to guarantee the existing wages and conditions of cleaners based at your school." It should not be assumed, however, that the Regulations will apply in this particular case."

What is the Liverpool council meant to do? What are councils throughout the land meant to do when not only are they told that it may be correct but it may be wrong, but they also receive circular letters from the Secretary of State for the Environment with huge newsletters saying that, if they try to shove in TUPE, they could be taken to court under some strange regulation of local government legislation, and the council could be held personally responsible?

We have the crazy situation in which councils are looking for advice, they are given ambiguous replies and then they receive circulars from the Department of the Environment saying that, if they do not get it right, if they do not follow it through, the councillors could be taken to court for letting down the ratepayers.

Thirdly, and terribly importantly, will the Minister give some guidance on what will be the difference on 1 July 1993? On 1 July, which is not far away, something called the EC services directive will apply. The expert officials who follow such things with great delight will be well aware that that says that any contract over £142,000 will have substantial consequences for TUPE and the responsibilities of local authorities. My understanding is that the ambiguous advice given by the Department of the Environment will be overtaken on 1 July 1993 when the EC services directive comes into force. There is not much point sending out circulars when we are getting it all wrong.

I simply make the point that the Government are saying, "Don't worry about this one. We have put it right and we will say that people who are not redundant should not be redundant because that is the way we have interpreted the European directive. We appreciate that the acquired rights directive was passed under a Labour Government, but it was a long time ago and the directive that was passed at that time is wildly different from the present law."

My final point—I hope that the Government will think about this—is that many private firms in Britain face disaster if they are to be sued retrospectively for doing what was legal at the time according to the British courts and the British Government, according to the advice that they had which was legal. They will face bankruptcy and ruin and many workers will be sacked. There is something very wrong in such a situation and something must be done. At the very least, our delightful new Secretary of State for Employment should say that he will meet those people and talk to them.

The whole problem has arisen because of the EC's obsessive desire to be involved in every aspect of law. I accept that the Labour party is delighted that some of the things that it wants——

Mr. Graham: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that people whose jobs were taken over have the right to have their existing wages and conditions transferred with them?

Sir Teddy Taylor: Previously they had no such right. If the service was transferred, there was no guarantee for anyone. The new employer could employ two people to do the jobs of 10. He could pay them half the wages. But, as the hon. Gentleman is well aware, that has all changed because of the delightful EC and the nice Mr. Delors. He said that everyone's job was okay, no one's conditions could be touched, and there must be meaningful consultation with the workers' representatives.

As hon. Members probably know, the EC made four demands of the Government, three of which they accepted without a fight; they simply caved in, which I find astonishing given that the Department of Employment was meant to be tough on the matter. The only issue on which they are having a battle with the EC is that the EC wants workers' representatives to be defined as workers' representatives. The Government say that the only workers' representatives that a Tory Government are willing to accept are registered trade unionists. That will probably lead to a great battle in the European Court.

Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister will tell me why, when the EC makes four ridiculous demands, the Government accept three of them without a fight and include them in the Bill. The only one that they want to battle against is that which ensures that only registered trade unions will be entitled to discuss the issue on behalf of workers. That is terribly unfair. Will I have to rush up and down the Fenchurch Street line, which is to be privatised, and say to every rail worker, "For goodness sake, rejoin a trade union"?

8 pm

My hon. Friend the Minister may say that that is silly, because everyone will benefit from the discussions, but the fact remains that the people discussing it will be the registered trade unions. If I were an employee on the Fenchurch Street line, I would want to make sure that the organisation discussing it was one of which I am a member. We have ended up with an appalling situation.

I accept that the main responsibility lies with the EC, which has stretched the acquired rights directive well beyond the bounds intended. I acknowledge that private firms are suffering hugely because of the retrospective element that will arise from the Eastbourne case, and that many face ruin. I accept also that the Government, sadly, have tried to pull a cloak of secrecy over the whole business. Being pro-European, they are trying to push through, with the help of my delightful and hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff), a Bill that will give even more power and responsibility to the EC, and want to hide the fact that businesses are being ruined and people are losing their jobs because of the acquired rights directive.

No Government like to say, "Give more power to this crowd," when jobs are being lost. *[Laughter.]* My hon.

Friend the Member for Worcester should not laugh at this. These are real problems. If his local authority has passed any contracts over to private firms, it will now face being chased retrospectively for lots of compensation for all those involved. It is not a laughing matter at all; it is a matter of jobs, cash and private industry.

Hardly anyone knows what is going on. Only the firms which will lose jobs and cash, and which will probably go out of business, know. I ask the Government to tell people what is happening. If the public do not know, how can they possibly prepare for the problems ahead? We appreciate that the Government can do nothing about EC measures other than fight them—and the Government do not want to do that.

Mr. Clapham: The hon. Gentleman used the word "freedom". Does he agree that Labour's amendment would give the individual freedom to decide whether to transfer to his new employer or to accept redundancy and look elsewhere for work?

Sir Teddy Taylor: That freedom has never been challenged by anyone. It is surprising that the hon. Gentleman, as a Labour party member, should say, "Please treat as redundant someone who is not redundant."

Where is the money for redundancy payments to come from but from public and private funds? If someone is offered the same job, working conditions, and everything else, it is difficult to understand why a Labour party member should say, "We will regard that chap as redundant." If I do not like the new foreman of my shipyard, why should I not be allowed to do the same and to change him? Why should I not be able to do the same if the shareholding of my company changes? It is terribly wrong to introduce a new law that says that someone should be treated as redundant when he is not.

Will the Government please hold discussions with the private employers, who are concerned, worried and perplexed? Will they tell people what is happening, because they did not tell them in the past? If they do that, we may enjoy a bonus in a dreadful situation, which will inevitably grow worse with the determinations of the European Court.

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): Once again, the House finds itself discussing the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981, which have a convoluted history. The hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) is correct when he says that there is considerable concern among private employers as to the implications for them of recent decisions of the European Court. That is common ground between right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House.

I differ from the hon. Gentleman in that I believe that those difficulties have more to do with the drafting of the regulations than with the interpretation that should be placed on the acquired rights directive. The history of the directive's jurisprudence makes it clear to me—and, I am sure, to other lawyers—that, although the directive itself is simple and transparent, the 1981 Conservative Government introduced the regulations from a position directly contrary to the directive's purpose and intent.

When a series of domestic regulations such as TUPE that supposedly implement the terms of a European directive are portrayed and presented from a different standpoint, sooner or later there will inevitably be conflict. The legal position is clear. In any case of conflict between a Community member state's domestic regulations and the terms of a directive, then—whether the hon. Member for Southend, East likes it or not; clearly he does not, and I respect his views—the directive must take precedence.

That confusion between the implications of the 1981 regulations and the clear intent and purpose of the acquired rights directive is a cause of genuine concern, but many of the difficulties to which the hon. Member for Southend, East referred are the fault and responsibility of the Government, in trying to implement the directive.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned a matter of particular concern in Southend, arising from the implications of privatising its public cleaning department, and the question whether the private contractor who took over that work will now face a serious legal liability. I understand that that might well be the case, but it is equally clear that the Government may have liability for the predicament in which many small employers now find themselves.

In the Frankovitch case at the beginning of the 1990s, it was established in the European Court that a legal liability can be enforced in member states' domestic tribunals, where a member state fails properly to implement the terms of a European directive. In Committee, I put that point to the Attorney-General. He made no attempt to respond, but there is a distinct possibility that the British Government may face substantial legal liability because of their botched attempts to implement the acquired rights directive.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman describes the British Government's attempts to implement the acquired rights directive as botched, but those attempts were made by the last Labour Government.

Mr. Hutton: The Minister is being uncharacteristically disingenuous. Although the last Labour Government attempted to introduce the regulations in the House, they made no reference to the notion of a non-commercial venture, which is the source of the difficulties in which the Government now find themselves. That notion was a transparent design to exempt from the acquired rights directive the privatisation programme that was then beginning and the eventual competitive tendering process which left many casualties in its wake. The Minister is wrong to suggest that the difficulties surrounding TUPE 81 are the responsibility or fault of the last Labour Government. He must remember that they did not succeed in bringing any enforceable regulations into effect.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman is right, but the last Labour Government signed up to the acquired rights directive and, in the other place, gave an assurance to the House that the directive's provisions would not have the effect of including private contracting of the kind that concerns my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East in respect of public sector services. That is firmly on record, as the hon. Gentleman knows from our previous, rather lengthy debates on the subject.

Mr. Hutton: We certainly had lengthy debates about the issue, but it is clear from our exchanges tonight that we shall not be able to agree about the import or intent of the

[Mr. Hutton]

acquired rights directive, or about the efforts of the previous Labour Government to introduce them into British domestic law.

I repeat my central allegation against the Government: our predicament, to which the hon. Member for Southend, East drew our attention yet again—I think I am right in saying that he spoke to the regulations when they were introduced in 1981 and made similar points to those which he has made tonight about the implications for private sector contracting—lies exclusively at the door of the Government. They misled many private companies that were interested in tendering for public sector work by telling them they did not have to worry about the implications of the TUPE regulations on the tendering process. It is astonishing, and therefore, I suppose, wholly in character, for the Minister of State to repeat his bogus contention tonight.

We have probably spent enough time dealing with historical issues. I know that they are of concern to the House, but I now direct my attention specifically to Labour's amendment and to the Government amendment tabled in another place by Lord Ullswater only a few weeks ago.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) said, the amendments are connected to the recent decision of the European Court of Justice in the Katsikas case. The Government's attempt to respond to that decision is typically extreme: employees will have no rights whatsoever if they choose not to permit their contract of employment to be transferred to the transferee, or the new employer.

The Minister of State and the hon. Member for Southend, East have made some play of the question, why should it be possible for an employee to have any statutory employment rights in those circumstances? The hon. Member for Southend, East described the situation as perverse. He said that it would not be a genuine redundancy so it would be unacceptable and inappropriate for workers in that position to have any employment protection.

However, I point out to both hon. Members that if one casts even a cursory glance at British redundancy law—for example, at section 84 of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978—one finds that plenty of examples of what one can best describe as specific redundancy cases are already written into English law. They perhaps do not come within the commonsense definition of the term, but we are dealing with the law and, as any lawyer will tell you, Madam Deputy Speaker, law and common sense do not usually have much connection with each other.

Section 84 gives employees the right to claim a redundancy payment even though they have been offered suitable alternative employment by another employer. As long as an employee reasonably refuses that offer, he or she is entitled to a redundancy payment. There are other examples in British employment law of workers being given a right to claim a redundancy payment. I am thinking in particular of the provisions relating to time off during short-time working. If a worker is laid off or put on short-time working, even if his job still exists he is entitled to claim a redundancy payment from his employer. The precedents are not in favour of the argument made by the hon. Member for Southend, East.

Other discrepancies may be found in the law applying to redundancy, but we could find plenty of examples under British employment law where workers are entitled to claim a redundancy payment even though it appears that, at first glance, a job still exists. I do not think that there is anything illogical or improper in that. If we want confirmation of that, we must consider the purpose of the Katsikas judgment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden was correct to say that the Katsikas judgment came as something of a surprise. Most people assumed that employees had no option but to accept the transfer of their contract. With hindsight, and after looking after the terms of the judgment, I am glad that the European Court of Justice decided that that was not so.

The Katsikas judgment was designed specifically to protect employees. It was an attempt not to subvert the import of the acquired rights directive but to enhance it by making it clear that a worker was and should be entitled to decide whether he wants his contract to be transferred to the new employer. I hope that there will be no disagreement between us about that. What is objectionable about an employee having the option of saying that he does not want to work for the new employer? The issue is the right to choose for whom one works.

8.15 pm

In the past, the House abolished slavery and ended enforced, conscripted labour. I am sure that Conservative libertarians will accept that individual employees should have the option to decide whether to work for a particular employer. If they exercise that option for genuine reasons —they may, for example, have an aversion to the management style of an employer—and state that they do not wish their contract to be transferred, there is no reason why they should not also claim a number of the statutory employment rights. There is nothing illogical in that.

We could perhaps have a more structured argument about exactly what rights an employee should have in such a case, but our objection to the Government amendment is that the Government are yet again adopting a blunderbuss approach. In an attempt to resolve the so-called dilemma of the Katsikas case, the Government are trying to take away all employment rights from the employee who decides that he will not have his contract transferred to a new employer. Clearly, other options are open to the Government.

Before the Government tabled the amendment, they should, as Lord Wedderburn suggested, at least have considered giving employees the right to claim notice or money in lieu of notice from their old employer. After all, in a transfer the old employer, or the transferor, brings the contract of employment to an end. That must be so, because he is ceasing to trade in a particular business. There is an end to or rupture in the employment relationship. In any other context, the employee would have the right to claim unfair dismissal, redundancy or at least the bare minimum contractual notice. Why do such rights not pertain in a transfer?

I am perfectly prepared to accept that we are dealing with a marginal case which will not involve many employees. If there was an endemic weakness in the regulations or the acquired rights directive, we would have

found more examples of British workers saying that they did not want their contract to be transferred, but it has not happened. I may be wrong, but I cannot recall one case of a British worker arguing that before an industrial tribunal. Although the case may be marginal, it has a potential impact on the working prospects of many people. It is unnecessary and severe of the Government to say that employees in this position should have no rights.

There is a case in law for allowing workers to be able to claim at least some of the employment rights to which they would otherwise be entitled. It is regrettable that the Government have taken the opportunity once again to parade their rather dubious European credentials. I am a strong supporter of Britain's membership of the European Community. We should recognise the fact that our only progressive and socially liberal employment measures in the past 14 years have been due to that membership.

I oppose the Government amendments. It is regrettable that the Government have taken the blunderbuss approach to solving a small problem, but it typifies their objectionable attitude to employment protection.

Mr. Graham: I intend to speak for only a few minutes. The hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) mentioned a letter. When compulsory competitive tendering was introduced in my area, porters, drivers and others lost £50 a week. We must remember that, although competitive tendering may suit the Government, it does not suit employees. Employees should have the right to decide who their employer should be.

I have worked for various companies. I sold my labour to them and when the employer changed, I had the right to move on. If I worked for a good employer, which I did, who decided to sell his company, he did not sell me along with it. He may have sold his business, but he did not sell Tommy Graham the engineer. Tommy Graham had the right to say that he had helped to make the business go well but he did not want to work for the new employer because he had a terrible record in engineering. I am saying that folk are not slaves that one can wheel and deal with.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *indicated assent.*

Mr. Graham: I am obliged to see that the Minister is nodding his head in agreement, but some of our trade union legislation is the worst in Europe. It is beginning to look as if the Government wish to treat trade union members as slaves, and second-class people in Europe.

Surely a man or woman who has worked for a local authority or a similar organisation for 20 years has the right to say, "I do not want to go to that employer." That person may have good reasons, such as those that I have already mentioned. The new employer may have a bad industrial record with trade unions and a record of firing people that is second to none. The worker may say, "I would rather take the money and cut, and see if I can get a better job." Surely that is the right of all workers in this country.

Mr. Forsyth: I agree with the observations of the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) on slavery. He is right to say that, if he were employed by someone and the company were sold, the employer had not sold him along with the company. Indeed, that seems to be the principal objection of my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) to the acquired rights directive, because where a business is transferred or sold, the employees are transferred, if they wish, and retain all the employment rights, including pay and conditions, whether or not the employer purchasing the company or the employer selling the company wishes that to be so. That is what the acquired rights directive has brought about, by means of the TUPE regulations.

Mr. Graham: The Minister must realise that if someone works for 20 years in a company as an ordinary engineer, plumber, baker, butcher or whatever, he accrues 20 years of redundancy money, and if he is older than 50 he get more. Someone in the situation described by the Minister would be throwing up 20 years' work, and 20 years' accrued redundancy money. Come on, Minister, it is not fair.

Mr. Forsyth: I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman has completely grasped the idea. If there is a transfer to a new employer, the employee's rights transfer to the new employer. If he chooses not to transfer to the new employer, clearly he has no continuing rights with the old employer. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East, and I am surprised at the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde, who is usually fairly concerned about value for money. For the Labour party to argue that people should be paid redundancy money because they are not prepared to continue to do the same job on the same terms and conditions is absurd. I do not belief that the amendment can have been tabled with any serious belief that it would be accepted. Indeed, the Labour party put forward no such proposal, but made a rather more moderate proposal, in the other place.

The hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) and I had an exchange in Committee when we were discussing the matter, but clearly I did not get my point across to him. He sought to blame the Government for some of the difficulties that have arisen on the transfer of undertakings regulations and said that we had not handled the implementation of the directive properly. He said that the complaints coming from contractors and others involved in local authority work—I understand the concern of my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East about that matter—were entirely due to the Government's implementation of the directive.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the debates in the other place on 10 December 1981. It is recorded in columns 1485-86 that the Labour spokesman, Lord McCarthy, said:

"The last Labour Government presented"—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman has not recollected that it is not in order to quote from the other place unless it be from a Minister's statement. I rather think that he was not quoting a Minister.

Mr. Forsyth: I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker. You are right that I should not quote, so if I may I will tell the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness broadly what Lord McCarthy said. He said, as I recall, that the Labour Government had presented the new Government with a draft regulation and that the approach in the 1978 draft by the Labour Government was different from that of the Conservative Government. The noble Lord said that one of the differences was that the Labour version spelled out clearly that charitable bodi

[Mr. Forsyth]

Government Departments and local authorities would be excluded from the scope of the regulations. My hon. Friend for Southend, East is concerned—

Mr. Galbraith *rose—*

Mr. Forsyth: In a moment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East is concerned about the interpretation of the European Court, which has been taken up by the Commission, of the phrase:

"not in the nature of a commercial venture".

That was the phrase that the noble Lord criticised as not having explicitly excluded local authorities from the scope of the regulations.

Mr. Galbraith: I well remember the Minister giving us that explanation in Committee. He will also remember that I said that the Labour spokesman whom he has quoted from memory said those words because no Labour Government, and no Labour Member, could conceive of a situation in which a local authority would wish to contract out its services. That is why it was not necessary to apply the regulations to such a situation. On the same basis, the Shops Act 1950 did not apply to Scotland. It was considered that we were such a religious nation that we would never open our shops on Sundays. We were wrong on that, and the premise behind the Labour Government's belief that it was unnecessary for the regulations to apply to local authorities was wrong, too. We did not support the principle then, and we do not support it now.

Mr. Forsyth: That is a nice theory, but unfortunately it does not stand up. I also seem to recall—of course, I cannot quote exactly the words that the noble Lord used, but no doubt the hon. Gentleman will look up the reference—that Lord McCarthy went on to say that the original draft by the Labour Government would avoid endless arguments about what constituted a commercial venture. In that sense he was right, and prescient about things to come.

Sir Teddy Taylor: It does not matter what the Labour party said or thought in 1981, or what the Minister thought in 1981. Surely we accept that all that is irrelevant. The Europeans have told us what the facts are; what people think does not matter. The Europeans tell us and we have to accept it, right or wrong, whatever was said in 1981. Does the Minister not accept that it is rather silly to be concerned about what Labour said in 1981? That does not matter. Democracy is effectively dead, and Europe will tell us what the facts are.

Mr. Forsyth: On that basis, presumably we are all wasting our time. It matters what the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness said, because I have to reply to him. He was blaming a Conservative Government for having made a mess of the implementation, so it is entirely appropriate for me to explain what view the Labour Government took.

Mr. Hutton *rose——*

Mr. Forsyth: I was just about to deal with what my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East said, because I thought that it mattered and that I ought to respond to it. Nevertheless, I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Hutton: I am grateful to the Minister for showing his usual courtesy in giving way. Does he not admit that, throughout the 1980s, Conservative Ministers in various Departments, especially the Department of the Environment and the Department of Employment, made a great fuss about the fact that the regulations would not apply to privatisations and competitive tendering, only to be told in the 1990s by the European Court of Justice that they had applied all along?

Mr. Forsyth: No, I do not agree at all. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman should say that, because he said that he had read the speech that my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East made in 1981. I do not have that in front of me, so I cannot quote it, but I shall rely on my memory. I think that the Minister at the Dispatch Box at that time was my right hon. and now noble Friend Lord Waddington, and that in response to my hon. Friend's speech he made it clear that the TUPE regulations as such would apply to local authorities. My hon. Friend asked the specific question whether privatisation would be within the scope of the regulations, and my right hon. and noble Friend made it clear that it would. The hon. Member for Barrow and Furness looks puzzled. I realise that this explodes his argument, but he can go to the Library and look up the words, by which, no doubt, he will be persuaded.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East asked a number of questions, most of which did not fall within my area of responsibility.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): It has never stopped the Minister in the past.

8.30 pm

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman may say that, but I become more conservative and more cautious as I grow older.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East expressed some serious concerns that I know are held outside and inside the House. I will ensure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment notes those points and that my hon. Friend receives a proper reply, especially about local authority competitive tendering and the case in Eastbourne.

My hon. Friend expressed concern about the way in which the law has been changed beyond what was originally intended by a series of judgments by the European Court. I agree that there has been a significant change in the meaning of the law. The Government believe that the acquired rights directive should be amended and we will continue to argue that, because it cannot be in the interest of value for money to restrain the ability to carry out competitive tendering fairly in the interests of the taxpayer.

Sir Teddy Taylor: If the Government are so anxious to fight the battle and to change the directive, why, when they had the infraction proceedings against them, did they cave in on three of the four demands without a battle? It seems astonishing that they had two years of secret discussions and caved in on three of the four demands. I cannot understand why they are fighting the fourth demand at all.

Mr. Forsyth: It is unfair to describe the Government's approach as having been to cave in without a battle. We must consider the infraction proceedings that are being

brought and, on the basis of legal advice, take a judgment on the best way forward. My hon. Friend is right to point out that, in one respect, we are continuing to fight our corner, but for obvious reasons I am not going to comment further.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East knows perfectly well that it is not within the power of the House to alter the terms of the acquired rights directive or to pass legislation in conflict with it, without incurring those same infraction proceedings. If he is anxious about the effect of that directive and the extension of the effect of TUPE, I can understand and sympathise, but the way forward is to seek to amend the directive. That is the Government's position, for which we will continue to fight.

My hon. Friend should be in no doubt about our commitment to achieving change or our understanding of the problems that are being caused across the length and breadth of Britain, of which, I am sure, he will continue to remind us.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I promise that I shall not interrupt my hon. Friend again—*[Interruption.]* I would not do this if it were not serious. On privatisation, is it the view of the Government that retrospective claims against local authorities will be met by local authorities, by the company or, in terms of Frankovitch, by the Government? Local authorities must know, because millions of pounds and lots of jobs with private firms are at stake. Surely the Minister should give some guidance on retrospective cases. Will councils, employers or the Government pay?

Mr. Forsyth: Ministers are expected to do many things, but they are not expected to give instant legal advice on cases where the facts are not before them. I cannot respond in the way that my hon. Friend would wish. The guidance that has been given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General has made it clear that each case under TUPE must be considered on its own merits. I am sure that no one's case would be helped if Ministers or anyone else were to make casual off-the-cuff remarks about the implications of the legislation.

Lords amendment No. 32 was tabled and agreed on Report in another place and is concerned with an employee who does not wish to transfer to a new employer when the undertaking in which he works is transferred. It was tabled to make the position clear following speculation about the effects in the United Kingdom of what is known as the Katsikas case. I am amazed that the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith), having had such a good Scottish education, is not a classical Greek scholar. Mr. Katsikas was a Greek chef in a German restaurant. He refused to continue as a chef when the restaurant was franchised.

Mr. Dobson: A chef in a Greek restaurant in Germany?

Mr. Forsyth: I am delighted that, on this occasion, the hon. Gentleman has a clear grasp of the detail.

The chef argued that he did not want to continue in the same job and the European Court considered whether he had a right not to transfer. The court held that he had that right. It has been suggested that, under existing United Kingdom law, the contract of an individual who refused to transfer to a new employer would remain in force with the old employer, whether the old employer wished that or not. If the old employer declined to maintain the contract of employment, it was suggested that he would be found to have dismissed the employee, who would then be entitled to redundancy or compensation for unfair dismissal.

I am delighted that the Labour party obviously agrees with the Government's assessment that that would not be so, which is why it tabled its rather misguided amendment, which would seek to provide that those who do not wish to transfer to the same job should be paid redundancy money. I do not know whether there is some kind of sabotage programme against competitive tendering in the public sector or some hidden agenda, but I cannot believe that the Labour party tabled this rather absurd amendment on an idle afternoon. Labour Members would like public sector employees whose operations are privatised or transferred to be able to get redundancy payments for refusing to transfer and the following day be re-employed in the same post, with all their conditions maintained. That clearly would be an abuse. It would be indefensible and I urge the House to reject the Labour amendment for that reason.

I hasten to add that the Government do not share the view that the contract of an individual who refused to transfer would remain in force. The advice that we have received is that an individual who refused to have his contract of employment transferred to an employer in this way would have no continuing rights against the old employer.

Nevertheless, because we are a careful and cautious Government, it was apparent that the Katsikas judgment had given some scope for uncertainty about the position of individuals who make use of their right to object to the transfer of their employment contracts, and the Government amendment was made on Report in another place not to change the existing law but simply to put the position beyond doubt. Having listened to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East, I am even more convinced that we were right to do so. Had the position not been placed beyond doubt, I am sure that, at a future date, some other unfortunate Minister would be berated for not having acted swiftly and decisively. I look forward to receiving my hon. Friend's support—along with that of the rest of my hon. Friends—in the Division Lobby. I trust that my hon. Friends will reject amendment (a) and vote for the Government amendment.

Question put, That the amendment to the Lords amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 230, Noes 306.

Division No. 300] **[8.39 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Bermingham, Gerald
Adams, Mrs Irene	Berry, Dr. Roger
Ainger, Nick	Blair, Tony
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*	Blunkett, David
Allen, Graham	Boateng, Paul
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*	Boyce, Jimmy
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*	Boyes, Roland
Armstrong, Hilary	Bradley, Keith
Ashton, Joe	Bray, Dr Jeremy
Austin-Walker, John	Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Barnes, Harry	Burden, Richard
Barron, Kevin	Byers, Stephen
Battle, John	Caborn, Richard
Bayley, Hugh	Callaghan, Jim
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret	Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Bell, Stuart	Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Bennett, Andrew F.	Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Benton, Joe	Canavan, Dennis

Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. James Arbuthnot and
Mr. Alan Meale.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*

Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. James Arbuthnot and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

Question accordingly negatived.

Lords amendment No. 32 agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 33, after clause 34, insert the following new clause—*Agreements not to take proceedings before industrial tribunal*—

(".—(1) In section 140 of the 1978 Act (restrictions on contracting out)—

(a) in subsection (2) (exceptions), after the paragraph (fa) inserted by paragraph 21 of Schedule 7 to this Act, there shall be inserted—

"(fb) to any agreement to refrain from instituting or continuing any proceedings specified in section 133(1) (except (c)) or 134(1) before an industrial tribunal if the conditions regulating compromise agreements under this Act are satisfied in relation to the agreement;";

(b) after subsection (2), there shall be inserted—

"(3) The conditions regulating compromise agreements under this Act are that—

(a) the agreement must be in writing;

(b) the agreement must relate to the particular complaint;

(c) the employee must have received independent legal advice from a qualified lawyer as to the terms and effect of the proposed agreement and in particular its effect on his ability to pursue his rights before an industrial tribunal;

(d) there must be in force, when the adviser gives the advice, a policy of insurance covering the risk of a claim by the employee in respect of loss arising in consequence of the advice;

(e) the agreement must identify the adviser; and

(f) the agreement must state that the conditions regulating compromise agreements under this Act are satisfied.

(4) In subsection (3)—

"independent", in relation to legal advice to the employee, means that it is given by a lawyer who is not acting in the matter for the employer or an associated employer; and

"qualified lawyer" means—

(a) as respects proceedings in England and Wales—

(i) a barrister, whether in practice as such or employed to give legal advice, or

(ii) a solicitor of the Supreme Court who holds a practising certificate;

(b) as respects proceedings in Scotland—

(i) an advocate, whether in practice as such or employed to give legal advice, or

(ii) a solicitor who holds a practising certificate."

(2) Schedule *(Compromise contracts)* to this Act shall have effect for making corresponding amendments in the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Act 1976, the Wages Act 1986 and the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.")

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Miss Ann Widdecombe): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendments Nos. 43, 61 and 62.

Miss Widdecombe: It gives me great pleasure to put to the House Lords amendment No. 33. My hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) drew our attention in Committee to employers' concerns in this matter. Therefore, I hope that he, and indeed all hon. Members, will welcome the new provisions. I hope that after the previous unsuccessful skirmish there will be peace among the Opposition, at least in respect of this provision.

Amendments Nos. 33 and 61 offer a new, alternative means by which the parties to a particular dispute may reach a speedy and effective agreement between them which settles the dispute, without needing to refer it to an industrial tribunal. It will, however, be possible to do that only if a number of important conditions included for the express purpose of safeguarding the interests of the individual are met.

Under the proposed new provisions, if an agreement settling a dispute includes a term which precludes an individual's right to bring or to continue proceedings before an industrial tribunal in respect of that dispute, that term will be enforceable provided that all the relevant conditions are satisfied.

At present, under the 1978 Act, any term in an agreement which precludes the employee's right to bring proceedings before an industrial tribunal is generally invalid. It cannot prevent the employee from bringing a subsequent tribunal case, the main exception being where an Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service conciliation officer has taken action under section 133 or section 134 of the 1978 Act to assist the settlement. Similar provisions are contained in the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, and the Race Relations Act 1976, the Wages Act 1986 and the 1992 consolidation Act. Amendment No. 61 would amend those Acts in the same way as we propose to amend the 1978 Act.

If the parties to a dispute have already reached an agreement between themselves, ACAS takes the view that it has no statutory role to become involved. In such a case there is no dispute outstanding and therefore, by definition, nothing to conciliate. In this it is supported by legal advice. The practice of validating, or "rubber-stamping", privately reached agreements represented a considerable drain on ACAS resources until it ceased after receipt of that advice in 1990. In 1989, the last year before that service was withdrawn, ACAS dealt with well over 17,000 such cases, representing 36 per cent. of the total number of cases received.

Representations seeking a change to the current situation have been made by a number of employer associations. We have therefore consulted interested parties on the proposals set out in the amendments, and the response has revealed that they would indeed be welcomed.

The proposed means of settling disputes will, of course, be optional. No one can be forced into signing such an agreement; people will always be able to choose to take their claim to an industrial tribunal instead. However, it is obvious that any legislation which allows individuals to agree not to bring or to continue with tribunal proceedings, even if doing so is optional, must be very tightly drawn for the protection of the individual. The amendments therefore include a number of important conditions which must be met if the term of the agreement which precludes the employee's right subsequently to bring a tribunal claim is to be binding. That is to ensure that no one is misled or coerced.

First, the new provisions can be used only in respect of a dispute which has already arisen between the parties and is outstanding. Concerns have reached us from some quarters that the new provisions could be used to encourage individuals to agree not to bring any tribunal claims should disputes arise in the future. I can reassure hon. Members that it would not be possible to use the provisions to do that. It is a condition that the agreement should relate to a specific dispute that has already arisen, and, if that condition is not met, the term of the agreement which precludes a tribunal claim will not be enforceable.

Secondly, the amendments require that the individual must have received advice from a qualified solicitor or barrister or, in Scotland, an advocate satisfying the conditions set out in the amendments.

9 pm

The adviser, who must be named in the agreement, must also be independent of the other party or parties to the dispute. The adviser must advise the individual about the terms and effect of the agreement, especially its effect on his or her right to pursue a tribunal claim with regard to the dispute to be settled by the agreement. The advice must be covered by insurance so that, in the event of the individual suffering loss as a result of negligent advice, he or she will be adequately protected. Finally, the agreement must be in writing, and must state that the relevant conditions are satisfied.

I hope that hon. Members will agree that those conditions will adequately safeguard the interests of individuals, while at the same time offering a simple and effective means of settling individual disputes without adding unnecessarily to the already considerable work load of our industrial tribunals.

Amendment No. 62 will amend schedule 13 of the 1978 Act, which deals with the rules governing the calculation of an individual's period of continuous employment. At present, schedule 13 allows for regulations to be made to preserve continuity of employment when an individual is reinstated or re-engaged as a consequence of the presentation of a claim of unfair dismissal under the 1978 Act, and when he is re-employed as a consequence of an agreement reached with the help of an ACAS conciliation officer when he claims action has been taken where he could present a claim of unfair dismissal.

The amendment extends the order-making power so that regulations can be made to ensure that, when individuals are re-employed as a consequence of an agreement reached under the proposed new provisions in the 1978 Act for settling a complaint relating to unfair dismissal, or the new provisions in the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 or the Race Relations Act 1976, continuity of employment will be preserved in exactly the same way.

It also extends the order-making power to cover re-employment as a consequence of the presentation of a complaint of dismissal under the Sex Discrimination Act or the Race Relations Act, and re-employment after

conciliation by an ACAS officer with regard to such a claim, but before such a claim has been presented. That closes a lacuna in the existing provisions.

I hope, therefore, to have the support of hon. Members on both sides of the House in moving that we agree with the House of Lords amendments.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): As my hon. Friend the Minister said, this amendment arises out of a clause that I submitted to the Committee to address what is and has been since 1970—and, indeed, for a period before that—a real problem in industrial relations. It cannot be right that, when two sides to a dispute voluntarily reach an acceptable agreement, there is no mechanism for making that agreement enforceable.

I accept that there were some defects in the clause that I submitted and I withdrew it on the undertaking that the Government would produce a clause in another place. The Government have produced such a clause and I wholeheartedly endorse it. I congratulate them on striking a sensible balance between the need to provide a relatively simple and easy method of resolving disputes and the need to protect the rights of individuals.

When I first read this clause, I thought that there might be a slight problem in that it would require employers to rely on a declaration by a solicitor or by a barrister representing the employee that various conditions had been met which they might be unable to verify. However, after examining it in practical terms, the likelihood of that presenting a problem would be limited. The professional bodies of both barristers and solicitors would deal heavily with any member of the profession who signed a false declaration.

On that basis, there should be no obstacle to agreeing to the clause. It will be widely welcomed by industry at large as a way of bringing peace and certainty to an area of industrial relations which has caused significant problems since ACAS withdrew from performing this service.

Mr. Galbraith: I assure the Under-Secretary of State for Employment that hostilities on this Bill have probably come to an end. I cannot absolutely rule out a knee in the groin as we depart from the battlefield, but we can probably say that there is peace in our time.

This clause has resulted from the efforts of the hon. Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) and he must be congratulated on that. The Government have introduced a reasonable and simple clause that has the important aspect of guaranteeing the rights of individuals. I am impressed by the conditions that are laid out—the employee must have received independent legal advice from a qualified lawyer and the agreement must be in writing. Those matters are of supreme importance.

The hon. Gentleman is correct not to worry about the question of false declarations. I understand that the legal profession is bound by an ethical code, as are most professions. One of the great sins of any profession is to make a false declaration. In the medical profession, doctors do not get struck off for killing anyone. But if they indulge in alcohol, adultery, advertising or false declaration, they can lose their livelihood. I presume that the position in the legal profession is similar. Alcohol is probably excluded from the list that applies to the legal profession.

The clause is simple and straightforward and it deals with an important issue. I am grateful to the Government for introducing it in such a splendid manner. It is such a good clause that I almost thought that I must have written it.

Question put and agreed to.

New clause

Lords amendment: No. 34—*Restriction of publicity in cases involving sexual misconduct: industrial tribunals*—

(".—(1) Schedule 9 to the 1978 Act (regulations for industrial tribunals) shall be amended by the insertion in paragraph 1 of the following.

(2) After sub-paragraph (5) there shall be inserted—

"(5A) The regulations may include provision—

(a) for cases involving allegations of the commission of sexual offences, for securing that the registration or other making available of documents or decisions shall be so effected as to prevent the identification of any person affected by, or making, the allegation;

(b) for cases involving allegations of sexual misconduct, enabling an industrial tribunal, on the application of any party to proceedings before it or of its own motion, to make a restricted reporting order having effect (if not revoked earlier) until the promulgation of the decision of the tribunal.

In this sub-paragraph—

"identifying matter", in relation to a person, means any matter likely to lead members of the public to identify him as a person affected by, or as the person making, the allegation;

"restricted reporting order" means an order prohibiting the publication in Great Britain of identifying matter in a written publication available to the public or its inclusion in a relevant programme for reception in Great Britain;

"sexual misconduct" means the commission of a sexual offence, sexual harassment or other adverse conduct (of whatever nature) related to sex, and conduct is related to sex whether the relationship with sex lies in the character of the conduct or in its having reference to the sex or sexual orientation of the person at whom the conduct is directed;

"sexual offence" means any offence to which section 141A(2) of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975, section 4 of the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1976 or the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1992 applies (offences under the Sexual Offences Act 1956, the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 1976 and certain other enactments);

and "written publication" and "relevant programme" have the same meaning as in that Act of 1992."

(3) In sub-paragraph (6), after the word "send" there shall be inserted the words "(subject to any regulations under sub-paragraph (5A)(a))".

(4) After sub-paragraph (7) there shall be inserted—

"(8) If any identifying matter is published or included in a relevant programme in contravention of a restricted reporting order the following persons shall be guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale—

(a) in the case of publication in a newspaper or periodical, any proprietor, any editor and any publisher of the newspaper or periodical;

(b) in the case of publication in any other form, the person publishing the matter; and

(c) in the case of matter included in a relevant programme—

(i) any body corporate engaged in providing the service in which the programme is included; and

(ii) any person having functions in relation to the programme corresponding to those of an editor of a newspaper.

Expressions used in this sub-paragraph and in sub-paragraph (5A) above have the same meaning in this sub-paragraph as in that sub-paragraph.

(9) Where a person is charged with an offence under sub-paragraph (8) it shall be a defence to prove that at the time of the alleged offence he was not aware, and neither suspected nor had reason to suspect, that the publication or programme in question was of, or (as the case may be) included, the matter in question.

(10) Where an offence under sub-paragraph (8) committed by a body corporate is proved to have been committed with the consent or connivance of, or to be attributable to any neglect on the part of—

(a) a director, manager, secretary or other similar officer of the body corporate, or

(b) a person purporting to act in any such capacity,

he as well as the body corporate shall be guilty of the offence and liable to be proceeded against and punished accordingly.

(11) In relation to a body corporate whose affairs are managed by its members "director", in sub-paragraph (10), means a member of the body corporate."")

Miss Widdecombe: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendments Nos. 35 and 44.

Miss Widdecombe: Amendment No. 34 gives industrial tribunals discretionary powers to protect people from intrusive or offensive media reports when they are involved in cases which include allegations of sexual misconduct. The definition of sexual misconduct covers sexual offences, sexual harassment and other adverse conduct based on sex, or relating to the sex or sexual orientation of the person at whom the conduct is directed.

The tribunals themselves sought such powers, and when the Department of Employment consulted interested organisations earlier this year, it was clear that there would be widespread support for such a move. The responses show that some potential applicants are deterred from bringing tribunal cases involving allegations of sexual harassment for fear of hostile and intrusive publicity. Many people find the experience of bringing a complaint which involves such allegations deeply distressing, and it is wrong that their distress should be enhanced by their fears of being identified against their will in salacious and incomplete reports of the case. Therefore, I think that hon. Members will agree that it is in the public interest that discretionary reporting restrictions should be available in such cases.

The amendment falls into two halves. New paragraph 4A(a) covers the small number of cases which involve allegations constituting an indecent assault or more serious sexual offence. It gives industrial tribunals powers to remove permanently from decisions and any other documents available to the public any information which would identify any person making or affected by the allegations. Those powers are largely needed to avoid the risk of the tribunals themselves committing a technical breach of the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1992. That Act, which applies in England and Wales, makes it a criminal offence to publish information which would identify the victim of such an offence without their consent for the rest of their life.

New paragraph 4A(b) contains the substantive powers. It covers the potentially larger group of cases which involve allegations of sexual harassment or other sexual misconduct, as defined in the new clause. In cases which involve such allegations the amendment gives industrial tribunals discretionary powers to make restricted reporting orders. Such an order, once made, will prevent any reports of the case published or broadcast in Great Britain from including information which would identify anyone making or affected by those allegations. The order will not be made automatically, but only where the tribunal sees fit. It will lapse on promulgation of the tribunal's decision unless it is revoked earlier by the tribunal. Transgression of the order will be a criminal offence punishable by a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale, currently £5,000.

Amendment No. 35 gives the Employment Appeal Tribunal discretionary powers equivalent to those given to the industrial tribunals by amendment No. 34. The powers to be given to the EAT cover appeals in cases which involve allegations of sexual misconduct, where the proceedings are appeals against an industrial tribunal's decision or refusal to make a restricted reporting order, or against any interlocutory decision in a case where such an order had been made.

In appeals in cases which involve allegations of an indecent assault or other more serious sexual offence, the amendment gives the EAT powers to remove information which might identify any person making or affected by those allegations permanently from decisions and any other documents which are available to the public. As in the case of amendment No. 34, those powers are largely needed to allow the EAT to avoid the risk of committing a technical breach of the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1992.

I hope that hon. Members from both sides of the House will join in the Government's strong condemnation of sexual harassment. The purpose of the amendments is to protect individuals in cases involving such allegations from offensive and intrusive reporting and to encourage potential applicants who might otherwise be deterred by the fear of such publicity to pursue their complaints.

Ms Quin: I congratulate the Minister on her appointment and wish her well. I hope that, in the course of her tenure, she will turn out to be a champion of women's rights at work. This amendment helps women at work, although I regret that so much else in the Bill does not.

The Opposition welcome the amendment, which is very much in line with suggestions that we have made in the past. We also welcome the strengthening of its wording at the instigation of Baroness Lockwood. We are glad that the Government took her additional words into account.

We also welcome the fact that there has been consultation and that the Government have listened to the various organisations that have made representations to them. We would encourage such listening.

We are fully aware that, in some cases of sexual harassment, harm may be caused to an innocent party by intrusive publicity. That is why we welcome the amendment, which allows reporting restrictions. I have one or two questions about it, however. We are somewhat concerned about how widely the new provisions may be interpreted. Of course, the Minister said that the reporting restrictions will not be granted automatically—that is important. Still, we must strike a balance between the need

to ensure that such cases are understood by the general public and are not pursued behind closed doors, and the need to protect innocent parties.

It can often be in the interests of the accused to avoid publicity altogether. We do not want to make that too easy. Although there have been many cases of which the reporting has been most intrusive, there have also been cases where reporting has raised awareness of the problem among employers, employees and the public. Some such cases have contributed to the problem being taken seriously, and we should all be pleased about that.

I know that some people say that all publicity is good publicity. I do not share that view; nor do I share the view that all publicity is bad publicity. We should be aware of the gains that publicity can produce. If reporting the results of sexual harassment cases is restricted, it may become more difficult to persuade employers that the subject requires proper complaints procedures and preventive measures. When a complaint of sexual harassment has been upheld by a tribunal, press reports can be an important means of emphasising employers' responsibility to take action to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. Although the names of the harasser and the victim are often not necessary, some reporting of the name of the employer and the workplace can be an effective method of alerting other employers to their responsibilities under the law.

I should like the Minister to comment in more detail on these observations and to undertake to monitor how the provision works in practice, so that, if there is a danger that it is being interpreted too widely, the matter will be reviewed in future.

9.15 pm

Miss Widdecombe: With the leave of the House, Madam Deputy Speaker, I shall reply briefly to the points that have been made.

I am very grateful to the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin) for her broadly supportive approach to the amendment. The Government are seeking to strike a balance. The hon. Lady made the valid point that publicity arising from sexual harassment cases draws the public's attention to the problem, deters employers from tolerating such activity and encourages them to ensure that they do not themselves become the subjects of such publicity. On the other hand, there will be no publicity at all if people do not bring complaints.

We have to strike a balance between encouraging public examination of the problem and deterring people from taking action as a result of what may have been extremely distressing circumstances. When people are deterred, the perpetrator is not called to account and is left free to carry on with his conduct. I believe that that balance is ensured, first, by the discretionary nature of the power—I repeat that it is certainly not automatic—and, secondly, by the fact that the order will lapse on promulgation of the decision, at which point the facts of the case and of the determination will be made known.

As in the case of the employment tribunals, in whose work we are interested although they are independent, we shall keep a close eye on the progress and effects of the legislation. I can certainly give the hon. Lady an undertaking that if this were ever interpreted as being automatic, we should want to put an end to such an interpretation.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 35, 36, 65, 79 and 37 agreed to.

Clause 37

REQUIREMENT TO INFORM EMPLOYER OF PREGNANCY ETC.

Lords amendment: No. 38, in page 54, line 26, at end insert:

"; and in doing so the Secretary of State shall have regard to the requirements of disabled persons."

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.—*[Mr. Michael Forsyth.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendments Nos. 39 and 40.

Mr. Galbraith: You will remember, Madam Deputy Speaker, that a brief moment ago we had a declaration of peace in our time and the cessation of hostilities. I was unable to guarantee departure from the field without putting a knee in the groin. However, I have had to reconsider my position, as a knee in the groin would be unfair to the Minister, who knows that I am only too willing to be fair to him. I shall therefore limit my activity to a shout of "Yah-boo" as we close hostilities.

My concern is not with the efforts that the Minister has made on our behalf and on behalf of the disabled. A fairly strong amendment would impose on Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Scottish Enterprise some sort of duty to take account of the needs of the disabled. The Minister thought originally that he had agreement with the Scottish Office, but this was more difficult to get through its system than he thought it would be. When he was a Minister in the Scottish Office, he was able to push through virtually anything at will. This is an indication of what happens when a Minister is moved to a Department dealing with matters on a United Kingdom basis.

Thus, this is a somewhat weakened amendment. I do not blame the Minister, and I know that he will not take my remarks personally, as he never takes anything personally. This provision makes reference to such times as the Secretary of State may require—not will require: there is no absolute statutory obligation—provision, if any, to be made. There may or may not be provisions for disabled people. It depends on what takes the Secretary of State's fancy because he has no obligation to include such provisions. That is probably the best compromise that the Minister could reach, but I am disappointed by this weak amendment.

The Minister knows the background to our amendment, so I shall not go through it. It relates to Lennox Castle hospital in my constituency for people with learning and physical disabilities. It had a useful garden project that was funded in part by the local enterprise company, but financial provision was withdrawn. That seems to be happening all over the country. When money in the enterprise companies becomes tight, provision of training for the disabled is the first item to be sacrificed.

Our amendment sought to redress the balance and to place on the Government a statutory obligation to consider the training rights of such people. The Minister agreed with the thrust of our amendment and tried his best. Unfortunately, he has not been completely successful.

[Mr. Galbraith]

There is another reason for a stronger amendment. At Question Time, the Minister and I had a discussion across the Dispatch Box about the laws relating to the employment of the disabled, and especially the 1944 legislation, in cases where the 20 per cent. quota is not enforced. The Minister has said that the policy is one of virtual non-enforcement.

It is difficult to get employers to fulfil their obligations. The Minister said that the Government try to cajole and convince them without having recourse to the law. It makes matters more difficult when the local training and enterprise companies do not have an obligation and can withdraw from looking after the unemployed. For those two reasons we sought a stronger amendment. The Minister has done his best and we are grateful for the amendment, but we wish that it was stronger than "may or may not" and "what, if any". We should be much happier with a statutory obligation to provide training for the disabled and others.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendments Nos. 39 to 79 agreed to.

House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975

9.23 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. David Davis): I beg to move,

That Schedule 1 to the House of Commons Disqualification act 1975 be amended as follows:

PART II OF SCHEDULE 1

Additional entries

1. The following entries shall be inserted at the appropriate places:

The Advisory Committee on Hazardous Substances established under section 140(5) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

The Citizen's Charter Advisory Panel.

The Disability Living Allowance Advisory Board for Northern Ireland.

The Forestry Commissioners.

A Meat Hygiene Appeals Tribunal constituted under regulation 15 of the Poultry Meat (Hygiene) Regulations 1976, regulation 15 of the Poultry Meat (Hygiene) (Scotland) Regulations 1976, or regulation 6 of the Fresh Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1992.

The Mental Health Review Tribunal for Northern Ireland.

The United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board.

Entries omitted

2. The following entries shall be omitted:

The Attendance Allowance Board for Northern Ireland.

Food from Britain.

The Highlands and Islands Development Board.

The National Bus Company.

The National Development Team for People with a Mental Handicap.

Northern Ireland Electricity.

Other amendments

3.—(1) In the entry beginning "The Parole Board constituted", the words from "constituted" onwards shall be omitted.

(2) In the entry beginning "The Parole Board for Scotland", the words from "constituted" onwards shall be omitted.

(3) For the entry beginning "The Planning Appeals Commission" there shall be substituted the following entry:

The Planning Appeals Commission constituted under Article 110 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991.

PART III OF SCHEDULE 1

Additional entries

4. The following entries shall be inserted at the appropriate places:

Certification Officer for Northern Ireland appointed under Article 69 of the Industrial Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1992.

Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Commonwealth Institute.

Chairman of the Chief Executives' Forum in Northern Ireland.

Full-time Chairman of Child Support Appeal Tribunals for Northern Ireland.

Chairman of the Consumer Committee for Electricity appointed under Article 7 of the Electricity (Northern Ireland) Order 1992.

Chairman of Food from Britain.

Chairman or any member, not being also an employee, of the Health Education Board for Scotland.

Chairman of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

Chairman of any of the National Boards for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting constituted under section 5 of the Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors Act 1979.

Chairman of the Northern Ireland Higher Education

Council.
Chairman of, or secretary to, the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee.
Chairman of the Northern Ireland Rural Development Council.
Chairman of the Training and Employment Agency Advisory Board in Northern Ireland.
Chief Adjudication Officer appointed under section 39 of the Social Security Administration Act 1992.
Chief Adjudication Officer appointed for Northern Ireland under section 37 of the Social Security Administration (Northern Ireland) Act 1992.
Chief Child Support Officer appointed under section 13(3) of the Child Support Act 1991.
Chief Child Support Officer appointed under Article 15(3) of the Child Support (Northern Ireland) Order 1991.
Director General of Electricity Supply for Northern Ireland.
District judge appointed under section 6 of the County Courts Act 1984.
Independent Assessor of Military Complaints Procedures in Northern Ireland.
Independent Commissioner, or Deputy Commissioner, for the Holding Centres in Northern Ireland.
Member of the Board of the Industrial Research and Technology Unit in Northern Ireland.
Member of a panel of chairmen for Child Support Appeal Tribunals for Northern Ireland appointed under paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 3 to the Child Support (Northern Ireland) Order 1991.
Member of a panel of chairmen of industrial tribunals established under Article 30 of the Industrial Training (Northern Ireland) Order 1984.
Member of a panel appointed under section 6 of the Tribunals and Inquiries Act 1992 of persons to act as chairmen of Child Support Appeal Tribunals.
Member of the staff of the State Pathology Service for Northern Ireland.
Northern Ireland Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members.
Pensions Ombudsman.
Secretary of the Medical Research Council.
Social fund Commissioner in Northern Ireland.

Entries omitted

5. The following entries shall be omitted:—
Chairman of the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting.
Chairman or other full-time member of the Forestry Commission.
Chairman of the London and Metropolitan Government Staff Commission.
Chairman of the Northern Ireland Training Authority.
The entry beginning "A member of the Interim Advisory Committee on School Teachers' Pay and Conditions".
President, or member of a panel of chairmen, of industrial tribunals established under Article 30 of the Industrial Training (Northern Ireland) Order 1984.
Registrar or Assistant Registrar appointed under section 6 or section 7 of the County Courts Act 1984.

Other amendments

6.—(1) In the entry "Chairman of the Agricultural and Food Research Council", after "Chairman" there shall be inserted ", or Director General and Deputy Chairman,".

(2) In the entry "Chairman of the Business Technician Education Council", for "Technician Education" there shall be substituted "Technology".

(3) In the entry "Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the Home-Grown Cereals Authority", the words "or Vice-Chairman" shall be omitted.

(4) In the entry "Chairman of the Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland", after "Chairman" there shall be inserted "or Chief Executive".

(5) In the entry "A full-time chairman of Social Security Appeal Tribunals and Medical Appeal Tribunals for Northern Ireland", for "and Medical Appeal Tribunals" there shall be substituted ", Medical Appeal Tribunals and Disability Appeal Tribunals".

(6) In the entry beginning "Any member of the Audit Commission", after "Local Authorities" there shall be inserted "and the National Health Service".

(7) In the entry beginning "Officer of the Supreme Court", for "registrar, or assistant registrar," there shall be substituted "judge".

(8) In the entry "President of Social Security Appeal Tribunals and Medical Appeal Tribunals for Northern Ireland", for "and Medical Appeal Tribunals" there shall be substituted ", Medical Appeal Tribunals and Disability Appeal Tribunals".

The motion seeks the approval of the House to the amendment by Order in Council of schedule 1 to the 1975 Act. As the House is aware, the Act is concerned with the maintenance of the independence of the House and the safeguarding of hon. Members from undue influence by the Executive through the exercise of patronage. Schedule 1 lists those offices whose holders are thereby disqualified from membership of the House.

It has been the usual practice for any legislation establishing new offices or winding up existing ones to amend schedule 1 accordingly. The 1975 Act is therefore reprinted from time to time in accordance with the provisions of the Act, to incorporate such amendments. The last reprint was made on 1 March 1992; a further reprint will be ordered after the new order has been made.

In addition, from time to time it is necessary to use the procedure outlined in section 5(1) of the Act to bring schedule 1 up to date by Order in Council. That section provides for the schedule to be amended following a resolution by the House, by adding offices which have been created by administrative action, by amending or correcting existing entries and by deleting offices that no longer exist or in relation to which a statutory disqualification is no longer appropriate. The procedure has been followed on nine previous occasions: the first was in 1961, and the last in December 1990.

Copies of the explanatory note describing the amendments in detail have been available in the Vote Office since 11 June. Perhaps I should add that Ministers have been individually responsible for the details of the additional entries and deletions which cover offices within their areas of responsibility. They have based their judgments on the same general principles and criteria which have been followed in the past and which are covered in the explanatory note. Of the 61 amendments, 37 are new entries, 13 are deletions and 11 are amendments to existing entries. Approximately 381 office holders will be brought into the scope of schedule 1. Up to 58 others will no longer be disqualified: that includes offices that have been abolished. There is therefore a net increase of 323 office holders disqualified. Of the 381 added to the schedule, up to 225 are part-time chairmen of child support appeal tribunals.

We also propose that the "de minimis" level—that is, the level below which paid offices in the gift of the Crown or Ministers do not normally attract disqualification—should be raised to £8,000. The "de minimis" limit, of course, has no effect on the level of remuneration received by office holders; its purpose is merely to prevent trivial disqualification. The 1990 figure of £7,000 has been uprated approximately in line with movements in average earnings, and remains within the range of a quarter to a third of Members' salaries.

[Mr. David Davis]

As we are following a well-established procedure, I commend the motion to the House.

9.26 pm

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): I congratulate the Minister on his appointment. I welcome him to his new post, and to his first chance to speak following his time in the Whips Office,.

The details of the amendments and additions to schedule 1 to the 1975 Act are not in themselves greatly contentious, but I welcome this opportunity—the first since 1990—to consider the scope and purpose of parliamentary disqualification. The principle of disqualification, the criteria on which it should apply and who, in practice, should be disqualified are issues that go to the heart of the powers and independence of the House. It is proper that certain groups should be disqualified from membership. Broadly, those groups fall into two categories—those who should be disqualified because of lack of competence and those involved in a clash of interests that requires a separation of powers.

About six further categories are included in the first category: examples are treason, imprisonment for more than one year in Britain—and, strangely, in the Republic of Ireland—and corrupt practices at elections. The Mental Health Act 1983 refers to a statutory procedure for vacating the seat of a sitting Member of unsound mind. I do not know whether the House would agree on exactly what constitutes "unsound mind", and on how subjective that definition is—we could debate that for some time.

Curiously, people under the age of 21 are also banned from the House. That would have denied it the services of Charles James Fox and Lord John Russell, and it would probably have been a weaker House for that. It is interesting to note that Sir Edward Coke, the great jurist, wrote in 1623 that several "infants" sat in the House in his day

"by connivancy—but if questioned would be put out"—

rather like dogs, I assume.

The Minister did not touch on the chief aspect of lack of competence, which is bankruptcy. That is of particular interest to the House at a time when, under the present Government, the number of personal bankruptcies has risen.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but I am afraid that he is straying beyond the remit of what is before us this evening.

Mr. Fisher: Whether the amendments should include bankrupts, and what the implications of that are, is important and I seek an assurance from the Minister on it.

Bankruptcies have risen from 7,728 in 1988 to 32,106 in 1992. A great many people have been disqualified by the Government's economic incompetence. The House would appreciate an assurance from the Minister that the Government have no plans to protect Lloyd's names and, by doing so, to protect the 47 Tory Members who apparently, according to press reports, are at risk of losing their seats and being disqualified for reasons of bankruptcy.

An assurance from the Minister would relieve a great deal of press speculation. *[Interruption.]* I will certainly give way to the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) if he wishes to intervene. If he does not, I am sure that he will agree with a former Member of the House, Mr. Thomas Benyon, who is a director of the Society of Names. Last week, Mr. Benyon said that this

"is a time bomb adding uncertainty to the ability of the Major Government to keep its majority intact for the next two or three years."

As the House is debating disqualification for the first time, these matters may be of considerable interest to 47 hon. Members. I am surprised that the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South is not taking it more seriously. No one wants to see hon. Members being disqualified.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): What?

Mr. Fisher: We should like to see them beaten at the ballot box, but not necessarily disqualified.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. In the short time that I have been in the Chair, it appears to me that the type of disqualification that the hon. Member is talking about is not set out in the motion as a disqualification.

Mr. Fisher: That is true, but as we are debating the 1975 Act and amendments to it for the first time in three years, and it is an important current issue, an assurance from the Minister that Lloyd's names will not be handled separately would be an important assurance. I will willingly give way to the Minister if he wants to put the record straight.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend said that the last thing he wanted to see was Tory Members being disqualified. I will tell him straight. If we see 47 Tory Members up to their necks in debt and being made bankrupt, I hope that he will join me in the Lobby to make sure they are kicked out.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will now return to the motion.

Mr. Fisher: My hon. Friend did not quite catch my drift. I would prefer to see them beaten at the ballot box where they deserve to be beaten, and I am sure that we agree about that.

I turn to the second category which is absolutely central to the amendments—those areas in which there is a clash of interests. We all know about the armed forces, the police and the judicial offices, but the categories added to schedule 1 by today's amendments all involve quangos. As the Minister said, the Government are adding 381 new posts to schedule 1. Those quangos were set up by the Government, as indeed were the previous 2,600 additions to the Act between 1987 and 1990. There are not many growth industries in Britain under this Government, but quangos are certainly one.

It is proper that people who head and work for quangos should be disqualified because of the potential clash of interests. They are, in effect, Government employees, and, like civil servants, they ought to be disqualified. The Government are the quango kings. Inevitably, the amendments will be repeated in the few years left to the Government because they are so intent on creating quangos—40,000 posts in 1,412 quangos, which spend an amazing one fifth of all Government expenditure.

My hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) has pointed out that in Scotland one third of all Government expenditure is directed through quangos. As the Government are using quangos

as an instrument of government, it is absolutely right that those who do the Government's work through those quangos should be disqualified from being Members of the House as if they were civil servants. It is interesting to note that the Government, by bringing forward the motion, accept the fact that those people are arms of Government and civil servants in all but name and conditions of work.

As the Government seem to imply by the motion, finance is the key. The quangos are public bodies spending public money and it is right that there should be a separation of powers to prevent a clash of interests. The Government do not always seem to understand that there might be such a clash of interests.

Baroness Denton, referring to the 804 appointments at the Department of Trade and Industry, said, "I cannot remember knowingly appointing a Labour supporter." The Government rigorously control the political complexion of the quangos—[HON. MEMBERS: "Rubbish."] Baroness Denton said that she never knowingly appointed a Labour appointee and if Conservative Members are proud of that and believe that that is the right way in which to handle quango appointments, let them intervene in the debate. The Minister's words are on the record and she has never taken them back.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): To put the record straight, the point that my noble Friend was making was that she does not consider the party political affiliations of people whom she appoints. She appoints people on merit. That is the important point. It has nothing to do with party politics.

Mr. Fisher: I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman is being deliberately humorous or disingenuous, but he knows perfectly well that Baroness Denton meant something totally different. She said that she was proud that she was appointing only non-Labour people.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): If I were my hon. Friend, I would not take any notice of the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick), who is on record as saying that the BBC radio programme "Start the Week" is communist propaganda. If the hon. Gentleman is prepared to take that view, he would be prepared to believe that Baroness Denton tried to appoint people on a neutral basis.

Mr. Fisher: If the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) will not accept the word of a Minister, perhaps he will accept the words of the *Financial Times*, which did a survey showing that, of the 10 largest quangos and the 30 largest quangos in the national health service, not one had a chairperson who was either a Liberal Democrat or a Labour supporter, but eight were paid-up members of the Conservative party. It is clear that the Government have a clear and consistent policy and that is why it is right that, because of the clash of interests, those people should be disqualifed from membership of the House.

What the Government do not seem to understand is the difference between their interests and the interests of Parliament or the interests of the Tory party and the interests of the Government. That they cannot make that distinction is to the Government's discredit. They need the separation of powers implicit in the Act, because for the Government it is a seamless robe.

I hope that the new Minister will bring a fresh eye and some intelligence to his responsibilities. I hope that he will bring a new look to his job—I am being nice to him again—and consider the role of disqualification and the clash of interests involved. He can make a start by reducing the number of quangos, by giving us a categorical assurance now that he will have no amnesty for Lloyd's names on bankruptcy and then by working with the Government to try to change the economic policies that are causing such ruin and shoving up the number of bankruptcies across the country to more than 32,000 in the past year.

The Opposition will not oppose the motion, but we shall keep a watchful eye on the Government's quango mania. We shall await the real disqualification act which will be the general election, when the Government will find that they are disqualified from office by the British people.

9.39 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South) *rose*——

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can you advise me how the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) can possibly comment, when he was not in the Chamber for the Minister's opening remarks?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That matter is not a point of order for me. Mr. Cryer.

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Minister spoke so rapidly that I was unable to get to the Chamber in time to hear his maiden speech as a representative of the right-wing extremists in the Whips Office now in the Government. I am sorry that I missed it—all two minutes of it.

When this motion appeared in the Whip, all the reporters and Lobby correspondents sought it out immediately, to see whether it contained other than routine changes to the 1975 Act of the kind that are made from time to time. They wanted to make sure that the Government were not trying to get off the hook the 47 Tory Members of Parliament who are up to their necks in debt at Lloyd's. *[Interruption.]* In fact, the motion does not say that. However, that matter is of considerable concern, particularly to those of us who were here in 1981, when Tory after Tory said that Lloyd's should have all the self-regulation that it wanted because it was such a wonderful——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are straying down that road again, and I have already drawn that to the attention of the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher). I hope that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) will return to the subject of the debate.

Mr. Cryer: I shall try my very best, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but Conservative Members were shouting from a sedentary position in a most unruly and undignified fashion, which brings disgrace to this great mother of Parliaments. I do not know how they can do it. It is quite appalling. I am grateful for your protection, Mr. Deputy Speaker, against that pin-stripe mob that is trying to break up democracy.

The proposed alteration to schedule 1 to the 1975 Act reflects the Government's penchant for appointing people instead of extending democratic principles. If the Government were concerned about some of those institutions, they could extend local authority democracy, by allowing some functions—if not all—to be undertaken

[Mr. Cryer]

in association with local authorities. The Government prefer to appoint people, which is a system of political patronage.

The hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) knows that that is true. He might protest when we say that such appointments are based on Conservative political attitudes, but the Government's record of the past 14 years is one of dedication to the application of political prejudice in every possible walk of life. It has been a corrosive influence. The Government have used patronage—of which this measure is an example—and extended the powers and expenditure of quangos. That was suggested in a recent issue of the *Financial Times*.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) mentioned, one fifth of Government expenditure is now made not through Parliament but through the allocation of moneys to quangos. It is clear from the explanatory note provided with the measure that some people are now paid honorariums, whereas before they did the job for nothing. The payment of those sums of money brings them within the scope of the legislation. That shows the extent of the patronage that the Government are doling out.

Labour will examine some of those appointments, to see whether they cannot be placed on a more democratic footing, instead of the terrible business of the Government handing out appointments on the basis that those appointed support the party in power. That has been a canker in our body politic. After the next general election, we shall take a good look at that situation, to see whether we can improve matters.

We can expect more such amendments, because of the Government's shifting sands of patronage. Many quango chairmen, chairwomen and members receive salaries that are way beyond the scope of ordinary people—they are very well paid. It is proof of the power of patronage that it buys people's support, even if there is doubt about that support in the beginning.

I have already mentioned Baroness Thatcher. It is worth remembering that she coined a phrase that echoed throughout her years as Prime Minister. She asked about any candidate, "Is he one of us?" and used that as the political test of reliability. If a Labour Government had applied the same test, they would have been hounded by the press, but because the vast majority of the press is on the side of the Conservative party, it pays little or no heed to the political corruption about which the Minister is now smiling.

The Minister is a former Whip and therefore in an ideal position to hand out patronage because, as a Whip, he has been bullying and bribing Tory Members for the past few years. He would tell them that if they were not present, they would not be allowed to go on free trips or become members of Select Committees. He knows all about patronage, which is very much part of the legislation. We shall examine the legislation again. We are unhappy about it as it stands, but this has been a useful debate to highlight the Tory party's patronage system.

9.45 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I, too, missed the beginning of the debate, but I have picked it up as I went along.

I have been scanning the list of new quangos which have been included or excluded, as the case may be. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) is right. The Government have been establishing more quangos, but I cannot see listed the Norman Lamont legal aid defence fund, which should be there.

The ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer was able to get money indirectly from Asil Nadir, but also from the taxpayer——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is straying from the motion. Will he please confine his remarks to the motion?

Mr. Skinner: We are talking about whether people should be disqualified because they have jobs that are in some way connected with money paid by the Government, which means by the taxpayer. The ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer received money from the taxpayer, which means that for a short time he also had an office of profit under the Crown—he was being paid his salary but also received £4,000-odd from the taxpayer. That was Government money and he should therefore have been included in the list. That is my point.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is very interesting, but it has nothing to do with the list.

Mr. Skinner: It has nothing to do with the present list. What I am trying to say is that people are disqualified for getting money from Government bodies, quangos or whatever one wants to call them.

I cite an example. When the 1974-79 Labour Government were elected, one of the first things they did was to hold a special mini-debate—you were probably here at the time, Mr. Deputy Speaker—about someone who had been elected to Parliament although he had an office of profit under the Crown. It had to be a Liberal, a Dr. Winstanley. He had been receiving money from the taxpayer and, therefore, through the Government. The Government suddenly realised that Dr. Winstanley should be barred as a Member of Parliament.

I think that it was Lord Glenamara, Ted Short at the time, who presented to the House a motion similar to that presented this evening by the Minister. I came into the Chamber and wondered what was happening. The Labour Government did not need the Liberals' support at the time as they still had a majority—we still had Stonehouse plus two. I found that the Labour Leader of the House was making arrangements to allow that Liberal whippersnapper off the hook, although he had broken the law.

The amount of money was small, but the Liberal was on a medical panel, and attended various panels and tribunals during the year. It happened on only a few occasions, but he was receiving a sum of money and that disqualified him. The Leader of the House—he did not get my support; I think that I was the only one who refused—got the House to agree to retrospective legislation—[HON. MEMBERS: "Terrible."]—for a Liberal!

Mr. Riddick: Which way did the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) vote?

Mr. Skinner: I do not know what he was doing at the time. He may have voted in favour, because he finished up as a Minister. But I am not sure which way he voted, because he was not a Minister at the time; that came later.

My hon. Friend made sure that the wheels of industry turned—[HON. MEMBERS: "What about the IMF?"] It had nothing to do with the IMF.

I was trying to illustrate the fact that the amount of money involved in the earlier case was small and that a very fine line was drawn in the case involving the former Chancellor of the Exchequer. That case should be examined, as, indeed, should any case involving a Minister or anybody else who gets money from the Government and thereby has an office of profit under the Crown. That is the real reason why I am taking part in the debate.

The case that I mentioned also shows that Labour did not go in for the policy of looking after Labour people. They were not very good at doing that. That is sad when we think about it. Now we have experienced 14 years of Tory Government and they have put hard-line Tories in everywhere—health spivs and all the rest. But when Labour were in power they used to say, "We shall have one for their side and one for the other." What a carry-on. If I had been in power that would not have happened. We would have had a few more socialists on some of those bodies.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Will the hon. Gentleman tell us whom the Labour Government appointed to be Her Majesty's ambassador in Washington and what relation he was of the Prime Minister of the day?

Mr. Skinner: It is well known that that was Peter Jay —[HON. MEMBERS: "Who was?"]—Jim Callaghan's son-in-law. *[Laughter.]* I never considered him a socialist.

Mr. Riddick: Jim Callaghan?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is all very entertaining, but what has it got to do with the motion? Let us get back to the motion.

Mr. Skinner: I am asked all those questions and I am expected to answer them, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I was talking about the fine line in the case of the former Chancellor of the Exchequer. There is another fine line to be drawn and that is why I believe the schedule should be examined afresh. We should consider the retrospective nature of what happens when former Ministers of the Crown and Members of the Cabinet become directors of privatised companies; in some cases they have taken the legislation to privatise those companies through the House of Commons. I am talking about water, electricity and so on. Nineteen former Tory Cabinet Ministers got 59 directorships between them, some of which were connected with the industries whose privatisation they had taken through the House of Commons. Those posts should be added to the schedule.

9.54 pm

Mr. David Davis: With the leave of the House, I thank hon. Members, such as the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central, (Mr. Fisher), who have congratulated me on my appointment. I especially thank the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) for his compliments. I also wish to thank the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who I read in the weekend press, has been nominated for a ballroom dancing honour. I hope that he does well.

It is difficult to answer some of the questions that have been asked and still stay within order, but I will do my best. I shall start by referring to a previous debate. When I asked for some previous editions of *Hansard*, one of my officials wrote that, over the years, the debates have been less than colourful. We have changed that tonight. In 1983, Mr. Charles Morris said:

"a somewhat salutary thought for parliamentarians to note and remember, that, in a job where some might think madness and bankruptcy are distinct possibilities, perhaps occupational hazards, to come here with either involves an infringement of the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975."—[*Official Report*, 12 April 1983; Vol. 40, c. 766.]

I think that he was right.

I say to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central that there is nothing in the amendment to alter the disqualification for bankruptcy. That disqualification comes under section 427 of the Insolvency Act 1986. There is nothing in the motion that changes that, nor am I aware of any intention to change it.

If the amendment introduced disqualification for the bankruptcy of ideas, the Opposition Benches would be rather vacant. In fact, they look rather vacant now.

Mr. Fisher: The record will show that all that the Minister said about the Lloyd's bankruptcy disqualification is that he had no knowledge of it, or that there was no intention. Could he give the House a categorical assurance that his Government will not change either the Insolvency Act or the 1975 Act to give any accommodation that might include Tory Members of Parliament made bankrupt by their dealings with the Lloyd's gambling den?

Mr. Davis: I do not think that people change laws on that basis anyway. The limit that I can give on anything is my knowledge of it, and I have given that.

It was suggested that over the years we have increased the number of quangos. In fact, in 1979 there were 2,167 quangos, whereas now there are 1,412. That puts it on a rather more even basis.

Mr. Cryer: Since the Minister has the figures, presumably in preparation for the debate, will he say how much money was administered by quangos in 1979 compared with today?

Mr. Davis: I do not have those figures. To take up a point that the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Bolsover pursued, the purpose of this Act is to avoid even the appearance of any influence on Members of the House. It was disgraceful to suggest that Baroness Denton said that she appointed on a political basis. The important word in that statement was "knowingly". Appointments are made on merit and Ministers are not told of the applicant's political affiliation. It is not done on a "One for you, one for us" basis, which appears to have operated in the past. That was somewhat of an own goal.

The suggestion that the need for the Act is a characteristic of a Conservative Government misses one point. This is a 1975 Act. I cannot remember which party was in power then, but I do not think it was the Conservative party; it must have been the Labour party. That rather puts paid to that point, too. The whole point is to prevent there being even the appearance of what Opposition Members have asserted. I commend the motion to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That Schedule 1 to the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975 be amended as follows:—

PART II OF SCHEDULE 1

Additional entries

1. The following entries shall be inserted at the appropriate places:—

The Advisory Committee on Hazardous Substances established under section 140(5) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

The Citizen's Charter Advisory Panel.

The Disability Living Allowance Advisory Board for Northern Ireland.

The Forestry Commissioners.

A Meat Hygiene Appeals Tribunal constituted under regulation 15 of the Poultry Meat (Hygiene) Regulations 1976, regulation 15 of the Poultry Meat (Hygiene) (Scotland) Regulations 1976, or regulation 6 of the Fresh Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1992.

The Mental Health Review Tribunal for Northern Ireland.

The United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board.

Entries omitted

2. The following entries shall be omitted:—

The Attendance Allowance Board for Northern Ireland.

Food from Britain

The Highlands and Islands Development Board.

The National Bus Company.

The National Development Team for People with a Mental Handicap.

Northern Ireland Electricity.

Other amendments

3.—(1) In the entry beginning "The Parole Board constituted", the words from "constituted" onwards shall be omitted.

(2) In the entry beginning "The Parole Board for Scotland", the words from "constituted" onwards shall be omitted.

(3) For the entry beginning "The Planning Appeals Commission" there shall be substituted the following entry:—

The Planning Appeals Commission constituted under Article 110 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991.

PART III OF SCHEDULE 1

Additional entries

4. The following entries shall be inserted at the appropriate places:—

Certification Officer for Northern Ireland appointed under Article 69 of the Industrial Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1992.

Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Commonwealth Institute.

Chairman of the Chief Executives' Forum in Northern Ireland.

Full-time Chairman of Child Support Appeal Tribunals for Northern Ireland.

Chairman of the Consumer Committee for Electricity appointed under Article 7 of the Electricity (Northern Ireland) Order 1992.

Chairman of Food from Britain.

Chairman or any member, not being also an employee, of the Health Education Board for Scotland.

Chairman of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

Chairman of any of the National Boards for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting constituted under section 5 of the Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors Act 1979.

Chairman of the Northern Ireland Higher Education Council.

Chairman of, or secretary to, the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee.

Chairman of the Northern Ireland Rural Development Council.

Chairman of the Training and Employment Agency Advisory Board in Northern Ireland.

Chief Adjudication Officer appointed under section 39 of the Social Security Administration Act 1992.

Chief Adjudication Officer appointed for Northern Ireland under section 37 of the Social Security Administration (Northern Ireland) Act 1992.

Chief Child Support Officer appointed under section 13(3) of the Child Support Act 1991.

Chief Child Support Officer appointed under Article 15(3) of the Child Support (Northern Ireland) Order 1991.

Director General of Electricity Supply for Northern Ireland.

District judge appointed under section 6 of the County Courts Act 1984.

Independent Assessor of Military Complaints Procedures in Northern Ireland.

Independent Commissioner, or Deputy Commissioner, for the Holding Centres in Northern Ireland.

Member of the Board of the Industrial Research and Technology Unit in Northern Ireland.

Member of a panel of chairmen for Child Support Appeal Tribunals for Northern Ireland appointed under paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 3 to the Child Support (Northern Ireland) Order 1991.

Member of a panel of chairmen of industrial tribunals established under Article 30 of the Industrial Training (Northern Ireland) Order 1984.

Member of a panel appointed under section 6 of the Tribunals and Inquiries Act 1992 of persons to act as chairmen of Child Support Appeal Tribunals.

Member of the staff of the State Pathology Service for Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members.

Pensions Ombudsman.

Secretary of the Medical Research Council.

Social fund Commissioner in Northern Ireland.

Entries omitted

5. The following entries shall be omitted:—

Chairman of the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting.

Chairman or other full-time member of the Forestry Commission.

Chairman of the London and Metropolitan Government Staff Commission.

Chairman of the Northern Ireland Training Authority.

The entry beginning "A member of the Interim Advisory Committee on School Teachers' Pay and Conditions".

President, or member of a panel of chairmen, of industrial tribunals established under Article 30 of the Industrial Training (Northern Ireland) Order 1984.

Registrar or Assistant Registrar appointed under section 6 or section 7 of the County Courts Act 1984.

Other amendments

6.-(1) In the entry "Chairman of the Agricultural and Food Research Council", after "Chairman" there shall be inserted ", or Director General and Deputy Chairman,".

(2) In the entry "Chairman of the Business Technician Education Council", for "Technician Education" there shall be substituted "Technology".

(3) In the entry "Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the Home-Grown Cereals Authority", the words "or Vice-Chairman" shall be omitted.

(4) In the entry "Chairman of the Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland", after "Chairman" there shall be inserted "or Chief Executive".

(5) In the entry "A full-time chairman of Social Security Appeal Tribunals and Medical Appeal Tribunals for Northern Ireland", for "and Medical Appeal Tribunals" there shall be substituted ", Medical Appeal Tribunals and Disability Appeal Tribunals".

(6) In the entry beginning "Any member of the Audit Commission", after "Local Authorities" there shall be inserted "and the National Health Service".

(7) In the entry beginning "Officer of the Supreme Court", for "registrar, or assistant registrar," there shall be substituted "judge".

(8) In the entry "President of Social Security Appeal Tribunals and Medical Appeal Tribunals for Northern Ireland", for "and Medical Appeal Tribunals" there shall be substituted, " Medical Appeal Tribunals and Disability Appeal Tribunals".

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

CUSTOMS UNION (SAN MARINO)

That the draft European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (Agreement on Customs Union and Co-operation between the European Economic Community and the Republic of San Marino) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 13th May, be approved.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

CRIMINAL LAW

That the draft Criminal Justice Act 1988 (Designated Countries and Territories) (Amendment) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 13th May, be approved.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

That the draft Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 (Designated Countries and Territories) (Amendment) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 13th May, be approved.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

That the draft Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Act 1990, (Enforcement of Overseas Forfeiture Orders) (Amendment) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 13th May, be approved.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Question agreed to.

Thorpe Marsh Power Station

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

10 pm

Mr. Kevin Hughes (Doncaster, North): I am grateful for the opportunity to bring the matter of the closure of Thorpe Marsh power station before the House. The closure was announced on 8 June, and is a disaster for my constituency and for many of my constituents who work at the plant.

The blame for the closure must be laid fairly and squarely at the door of the Government. I hope that the Government will get their act together and get an energy policy before it is too late for the many hundreds of people in my constituency who rely on the power industry for their jobs, features and livelihoods.

The decision to close Thorpe Marsh proves the folly of the Government's energy policy. It will lead directly to more than 200 job losses in my constituency and in the Doncaster area, and ultimately to many more job losses. The 1,000 MW plant is just another casualty of a policy which, through a mixture of incompetence and malice, has rigged the market against coal. As a result, the workers of Thorpe March now have to suffer.

The coal-fired plant has proved itself time and again. In May 1993, *National Power News* boasted proudly that Thorpe Marsh had set thermal efficiency records for the past two years running. The reason for the success of the plant lies largely with the excellent industrial relations and team approach. Management and unions have worked side by side and given their absolute best to the plant and to National Power.

For the workers, the closure came out of the blue. In the past three years, National Power has invested £40 million in new equipment at the plant, and the future of Thorpe Marsh seemed secure. Yet we are now told that there is no option but closure. The workers at Thorpe Marsh have done all they can to keep the plant successful; they even accepted 120 redundancies in March. Now the remaining 232 jobs are also to go. That is a profound disappointment to all those involved, and a shock to the local community.

Thorpe Marsh workers will feel the most immediate effects of the loss of the plant, but many other groups of workers in Doncaster will also be affected. Bentley and Hatfield pits both lie in my constituency. Both are currently undergoing so-called market testing, and both rely on Thorpe Marsh to buy one third of the coal that they produce. Last year, Bentley supplied 270,000 tonnes to Thorpe Marsh, and Hatfield supplied 400,000 tonnes. On Friday 11 June, the last deliveries of coal to Thorpe Marsh from those two pits were made. The plant will rely on stockpiles between now and the closure date next March. That has massive implications for both Bentley and Hatfield. With one third of their market gone, their chances of surviving beyond market testing have been seriously undermined.

Where will the two pits find new markets of that size now? The closure is a huge blow to all the men at the two pits, who had at least been offered some chance of a future but who have suffered a serious setback with the announcement of the closure of Thorpe Marsh. With an unemployment rate of 13·6 per cent., Doncaster is way

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above the national average, and further rises caused by the closure of Thorpe Marsh will make matters even more difficult.

However, should the closure of Thorpe Marsh also force local pits to close, the long-term unemployment effects will decimate many towns and villages in the area. White collar jobs, along with mining jobs, will go. Local businesses, especially small businesses, and those involved in mining supplies will be badly hit.

It has been estimated that the possible effects of the closures could add as much as 6 per cent. to the present unemployment total. The implications go far beyond the tragedy of Thorpe Marsh. That is why I call on the Government to help. It is a Government-created problem, and the Government must solve it. I do not want to see any more job losses and economic difficulties in Doncaster. I hope that the Government are as concerned as I am about the economic impact of their energy policies on areas such as Doncaster, and that they are finally willing to redress the imbalance in our energy markets.

The Government's energy policy, or lack of one, is at the heart of the debate. Privatisation of the electricity industry sounded the death knell of the coal industry and, with it, coal-fired electricity generation. The Government have stood idly by while regional electricity companies have invested in gas-fired plant when ample capacity already existed in the generating industry. Regional electricity companies want their own generating stations so that they can produce and sell their electricity, at whatever price they want, to themselves. Either the Government do not understand what that will mean for consumers and the size of their electricity bills, or they do not care.

The electricity consumer is playing for the dash for gas and for the building of the expensive new plant that is needed before one watt of electricity is produced. The costs of that plant outweigh any cost benefits of an alternative fuel, which will actually add to rather than reduce consumers' bills. It is only when there is a shortage of capacity that building such an amount of plant can be justified on cost grounds, yet the Government have let the dash for gas continue.

The Government have persisted in the fiction that burning gas is an efficient way of producing electricity, and an efficient use of the nation's energy resources. However, gas burned in power stations gives only 52 per cent. efficiency, and that is at maximum, whereas gas burned in industrial and domestic use is more than 90 per cent. efficient.

That is a dire waste of our scarce energy resources, especially in the light of the alternative of coal fuel, which has fewer alternative uses in the industry and in homes and which has served Britain so well in the past as an efficient generator of electricity. Instead of encouraging the most efficient use of an increasingly scarce energy resource, the Government have allowed coal-fired stations to be closed and have let regional electricity companies continue their profiteering. They have stood by and allowed consumers to be exploited once again.

The consumer is being exploited even more blatantly by the fossil fuel levy, which is subsidising a nuclear industry that has crippling plant, safety and decommissioning costs. With 10 per cent. of all fuel bills going to support the nuclear industry, the consumer is being forced to give a massive subsidy to the industry, and almost 20 per cent. of Britain's fuel is being heavily subsidised. Nuclear Electric received subsidy of more than £1 billion last year, and that subsidy came straight from the pockets of consumers, rich and poor alike. That industry cannot compete with other sources of fuel because of high costs, yet its markets are guaranteed.

Regional electricity companies are forced to buy the output of the nuclear industry, and the consumer is forced to pay the costs of the consequent inefficiency. The amount of electricity that is being sold in that way is on the increase —from 47 to 57 TWh per annum over the past three years. Nuclear power output continues to rise and consumers, are paying more for their electricity to subsidise that expensive white elephant.

The folly of the policy is demonstrated by the case of Trawsfynydd power station. That nuclear power station has not produced enough electricity in the past two years to light a 60 watt bulb, yet it remains open. It has been staffed by 560 people for all that time, costing taxpayers and consumers a small fortune. That should be compared to the model of the Thorpe Marsh power station. It is a comparatively efficient generator, has low costs and has produced good results. For their efforts, the workers and management are now rewarded with redundancies and closure.

The experience with the interconnector has proved that the Government's energy policy is a farce. Only this Government would be barmy enough to allow electricity to be imported when we have surplus capacity. The Government allowed the interconnector to become a one-way traffic, making Electricité de France more like simply another power station, rather than an emergency supply.

The Government's perversion of the energy market has created such waste and such costs for consumers. The nature of the market desperately needs to be tackled, and the interests of consumers and workers protected. It is that wasteful policy that has caused the closure of Thorpe Marsh. It is simply not true to say that coal has no market or that coal-generated electricity is not efficient. Coal-fired power stations are simply not being allowed to compete with gas and nuclear fuels. We have already lost 6,000 MW of coal-fired generating capacity and we look set to lose another 3,000, only to see it replaced by gas powered plant.

A new gas-fired station is being built only 20 miles down the road from Thorpe Marsh at Keadby near Scunthorpe and will have a 750 MW generating capacity. Where is the justification for closing one efficient plant and replacing it with a new plant, incurring all the costs of building and commissioning? How can such a wasteful duplication be based on sound economic arguments? The point is that there is no justification.

The Government's policy lacks any overview or coherence. It has pitted one energy source against another, encouraged duplication and waste, endorsed high costs and high prices for the consumer and penalised efficient coal-fired generation. In so doing, the Government are jeopardising many thousands of jobs in power generation, coal mining and related industries in the Doncaster area.

Have the Government not noticed the destructive effects of their energy policy? The Minister must admit that, through incompetence or design, his Government have set the energy market against the coal industry and all

those who work in it. The closure of Thorpe Marsh will have disastrous consequences for the economy in my constituency and in many other localities.

Thorpe Marsh power station is an effective plant, with a dedicated staff who have found a recipe for success in teamwork and hard work. They represent more than simply a branch of a company—they are an important part of the local community, and have given a great deal back to Doncaster in the past few years. Thorpe Marsh should be given a chance. It should be given back the chances that the Government took away when they wrecked Britain's energy market and condemned the coal industry.

Thorpe Marsh must be saved. The only thing that will save it is intervention from the Minister. Over the past 14 years, the Government have stacked the cards against the coal industry and we are all paying the price for that incompetence. It is time for the Government to tackle the problems that they have created. I call on them to intervene to correct the appalling imbalance that they have created in the energy market, and save Thorpe Marsh power station from closure.

10.14 pm

Sir Harold Walker (Doncaster, Central): I want to support my hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes) who has outlined a tragic case. I attended the official opening of Thorpe Marsh power station, little thinking that I would have the sad experience of bemoaning the consequences of its closure in the House. The Minister will recall that I recently led a deputation with my hon. Friend about the appalling consequences for the region of the pit closure programme and the serious economic difficulties that we faced. I little thought that we would have to face an additional hammer blow.

It will not affect merely the power station's employees, many of whom are my constituents, but will have a knock-on effect, further exacerbating the problems caused by the closures of pits and railways. Those matters are interconnected, as my constituency and that of my hon. Friend depend on the three industries, which together face a crisis.

As my hon. Friend said, we are not facing a natural catastrophe, such as the floods in north Wales or fire. The disaster was created by Government policies. The Government must provide the answers for the thousands of people in my constituency and that of my hon. Friend who are suffering as a consequence of those policies. They face misery and hardship and, unless the Government intervene, there is little likelihood of those people obtaining new employment and a new future.

I want the Government today to say not only what they will do about the consequences of the closure of Thorpe Marsh power station, but what they will do to help my constituency and that of my hon. Friend which will be, to put it mildly, blighted by the Government's policies.

10.17 pm

The Minister for Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar): I am delighted to see you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the Chair yet again on a coal-related matter.

I understand the concern felt about this subject. I well remember the deputation led by the right hon. Member for Doncaster, Central (Sir H. Walker), accompanied by the hon. Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes). We discussed in detail the widespread concern then felt in Doncaster about the impending closure of the two pits. I felt that that was a useful meeting, at which we had a frank exchange of views. I hope that those present felt that I was able to provide reassurances about our plans for development area status for the region and the issue of an enterprise zone in south Yorkshire.

I know that the hon. Member for Doncaster, North made a case for locating the enterprise zone in somewhere other than the Dearne valley. He did not mention it in his speech tonight, but I know that he feels that the announcement about Thorpe Marsh—and its possible implications for other pits in the region—bears on the issues that he and others were making at the previous meeting. I assure him that we shall bear in mind those representations.

I also recognise that it is a particularly sad moment for the employees at Thorpe Marsh. I do not think that there is any doubt that the station has performed well, and the employees have done what they can to improve the plant's efficiency. The closure announcement is linked to two factors: the capacity of the market to absorb the station's production and the fact that the station is old.

The right hon. Member for Doncaster, Central said that he was at its opening; he did not refer—perhaps understandably—to the fact that that was more than 30 years ago. It is commonly recognised that the station is one of the older stations still in operation. Drax, which is perhaps the best example of a modern station, has a generating capacity no less than four times the size of Thorpe Marsh's.

When Thorpe Marsh was opened, it represented a new type of technology and a new level of thermal efficiency, but everyone recognises that it has been overtaken by developments since then. It is also widely recognised that, without extensive retrofitting, coal stations have a finite life.

I do not wish to raise false hopes or lay myself open to the charge of misrepresentation, but I should point out that the closure announcement by National Power is not necessarily the end of the story for Thorpe Marsh. The Director General of Electricity Supply has made it clear that he wants greater competition in electricity generation, and he has drawn particular attention to the possibilities for competition in coal-fired generation. Professor Littlechild has also made it clear that the generators could and should do more to make redundant generating plant available for sale to third parties.

One advantage of the early announcement of this closure is that it will at the very least provide enough time for real negotiations with potential purchasers. I do not want to raise hopes, however, because I genuinely do not know whether potential purchasers will emerge. I do know that there are companies looking for investment opportunities in coal-fired plant in this country, and that the director general is keen that such opportunities should genuinely exist. I also know that both National Power and PowerGen are aware of that. I ask the hon. Gentleman to bear this in mind, although I do not want to mislead him or his constituents about the possibility of further life for Thorpe Marsh.

Mr. Kevin Hughes: Can the Minister confirm a story carried on a local television news programme in Yorkshire this evening to the effect that two private generators are

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interested in purchasing the Thorpe Marsh power station? Does he have any knowledge of that; if so, will he elaborate?

Mr. Eggar: I am afraid that I do not know what was on the programme—I did not see it. I am not aware of any such interest in Thorpe Marsh. I am aware that a small number of companies have expressed interest, in principle, in entering into serious negotiations about the possibility of purchasing older, coal-fired plant. I understand that some companies wish to examine the possibility of retrofitting such plant, which I have been told can be done cost-effectively, and which has been done in the United States to considerable effect. Operating costs have been reduced, and the operating efficiency of older plant has been increased.

I do not think it fair to the employees of Thorpe Marsh or to the people of Doncaster to raise hopes which I am not sure can be fulfilled, but it is right to point out that such an option exists.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the role of nuclear power and of the new gas-fired stations. There was reference to the inefficiency of producing electricity from gas. The new gas-fired generating plant has a thermal efficiency of above 50 per cent., and that figure is rising as each new piece of plant comes on stream. Currently the most efficient coal-fired plant has an efficiency level of below 40 per cent., so there is a considerable gap. Gas has become competitive as a result of technological breakthrough in terms of the development of the combined cycle.

I—like many other hon. Members on both sides of the House, I suspect—believe that there may very well be a similar technological breakthrough in the development of coal-fired technology, which will improve thermal efficiency, as well as the environmental operating factors. Of course, in considering the environmental aspects of coal-fired plant, one must always bear in mind the fact that, by definition, it will be virtually impossible to remove all carbon emissions. As far ahead as, with existing technology, one can reasonably predict, this will always be an environmental disadvantage for coal as against other generating methods, including gas and nuclear generation.

We have been told that nuclear is clean. There is no doubt that, in terms of emissions, it is considerably cleaner than both coal and gas. However, it would be inappropriate at this time to rejig the debate that we had at the time leading up to the coal review and the matters that were investigated by the Select Committee. It is fair to point out, however, that the Select Committee, as well as the Government, recognised that there was a role for nuclear power and that the avoidable costs were low. The Select Committee did not argue for an end to the building of gas-fired plant.

The hon. Gentleman made some remarks about Trawsfynydd. That nuclear station is not operating, as it has been necessary to develop a safety case for the inspectorate. The result of the inspection is awaited. I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's concern about Bentley and Hatfield. I realise why he and his constituents are worried. I do not know exactly where the coal flows will go. That is a matter for British Coal and for the generators. However, I strongly believe that there is a market for deep-mined British coal. That is why the Government have made a subsidy available and why we are committed to the market testing period to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

I understand why the hon. Gentleman has raised this matter on the Adjournment. I understand the immediate response to the announcement about the closure of Thorpe Marsh. Everybody realises that we have a stock of older coal-fired plant, which is not competitive and is bound to face replacement. It is not competitive with nuclear or gas plant or, critically, with the most modern coal-fired plant.

It would not be appropriate for the Government to intervene on an issue of this kind. It is clear that National Power, the owners, believe that there is no market for the product of the plant and that keeping it open would undermine the viability of other generating plants, which they regard as more productive and more competitive. It is possible that other entities will be interested in the plant, and I know that the director general will want to pursue that possibility.

I thank the hon. Gentleman for raising this very important issue. I have taken careful note of all the points that he has made.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 17 June 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LONDON UNDERGROUND (JUBILEE) BILL
Lords amendments agreed to.

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*

WOODGRANGE PARK CEMETERY BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 24 June.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 4) BILL *(By Order)*
Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [8 February], That the Bill be now read a Second time.
Debate to be resumed on Thursday 24 June.

CROYDON TRAMLINK BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITIES BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 24 June.

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL FINANCE

Public Expenditure Review

1. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what areas of welfare spending he has excluded from his review of public expenditure.

3. **Ms Lynne:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made in his review of public expenditure of major spending Departments.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Michael Portillo): The Government are conducting a long-term review of public expenditure starting with the Department of Social Security, Department of Health, Department for Education and the Home Office.The Government have a duty to examine all areas of public spending to ensure that they give value for money. We would be failing in our duty if any area were to be exempt from scrutiny. The reviews will produce interim results that will be helpful in this year's public expenditure survey.

Mr. Bayley: Millions of people are concerned about the review and the Government should set out its terms of reference and scope. Given the Chief Secretary's meeting with the Prime Minister to rewrite invalidity benefit, will he confirm that the Government intend to exclude

"those who suffer from progressive diseases—for example, multiple sclerosis—and heart patients who are unable to walk on the flat for 200 yards"?

Before I am accused of scaremongering, I may say that that is a direct quote from the Department of Social Security document prepared for that meeting. Will the Chief Secretary explain what other cuts he intends to make to meet the £5,000 million target set for the DSS that is mentioned in that same document?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman knows that the Government are on all fours with the Opposition. The right hon. and learned Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition said:

"I set up the Social Justice Commission to conduct a very wide-ranging view of the . . . complex system of tax, benefits and rights . . . We have not looked at any of this, almost since Beveridge."

That is what the Government are doing. We are examining the way in which we provide value for money through the system. As to invalidity benefit, the hon. Gentleman knows that that must be looked at. There has been a massive increase in the number of claimants for invalidity benefit at a time when the health of the nation has been improving. That benefit now costs £6·2 billion a year. No decisions have been taken—in fact, no firm proposals have yet been put to Ministers. It is of course of great importance to us to ensure that the vulnerable are protected.

Ms Lynne: Now that the Chancellor has ruled out prescription charges for pensioners and charging for hospital beds, will he improve his left-wing credentials further by ruling out additional cuts in invalidity benefit and prescription charges in respect of children who are just above income support level? Or does the Chief Secretary feel that the Chancellor will be a little too worried about his own political advancement if the right wing of the Conservative party disapproved?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Lady does not help the debate by trivialising it. We obviously have to address the question of social security spending rising faster than our national income, which presents us with a problem. We must examine the benefits that are growing fastest and ask ourselves why benefits are rising 3 per cent. a year in real terms, which is much faster than national income. We must take careful decisions. There will be no announcements before November, and it will be later than that, in respect of long-term questions, before we can reach decisions, because these serious matters need careful consideration.

Mr. John Townend: When my right hon. and learned Friend reviews public expenditure, will he bear in mind that every firm in the country that has survived during the recession—small, medium or large—has had to cut its overheads and slim down its staff? Meanwhile, the public sector and local government are still bloated. In the last year, we have increased the strength of the civil service by 2·5 per cent.—nearly 14,000 people. When he looks for savings, will my right hon. Friend set all Departments a target of a 5 per cent. reduction in manpower to cut the Government's overheads?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend has made an important point. In examining Government spending, all we are really doing is ensuring that the public sector does what the private sector has had to do throughout the recession—make sure that it lives within its means. The same applies to every family in the country. It would be intolerable if people made sacrifices, while the Government continued to live beyond their means on the back of borrowing and taxation which are available to them but not to families and businesses.

We need to consider civil service numbers and running costs very carefully. The civil service had quite a tight settlement last year, and I imagine that next year's figures may show the lowest number since the war. I think that that is quite appropriate.

Mr. Jessel: We all greatly admire the excellent work of the national health service, but will my right hon. Friend invite the Secretary of State for Health to consider whether she should continue to provide surgical operations on the NHS for the removal of tattoos? If a person has had printed on his skin signs, symbols, messages and coloured pictures——

Madam Speaker: Order. I have the impression that the hon. Gentleman's question might be better put to the Secretary of State for Health herself. The Chief Secretary has probably got the point by now.

Mr. Portillo: I thought my hon. Friend's question very valuable. It is now etched indelibly on my mind.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Now that the Cabinet has met to discuss public spending, why does not the Chief Secretary use this opportunity to rule out cuts in invalidity benefit for those suffering from multiple sclerosis, and the heart patients who cannot walk 200 yards? Why does he not tell us that he will drop his proposal to privatise some national insurance benefits, and that anything other than full compensation for pensioners and others on low income who have been hit by VAT rises will not be enough? Why must the users of public services pay the price of the Government's economic mismanagement?

Mr. Portillo: I wonder why the hon. Gentleman does not use his own opportunity to desist from scaremongering. Is he not aware of the real anxiety and fear that he causes? Is he not aware of the disrepute in which he is now held because of the disgraceful tactics that he has used, day after day? Is he not aware that the British people are now pretty well fed up with him, and that he should stop?

Mr. Congdon: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, although it is important to review all aspects of public expenditure, many people are rightly concerned about the growth in the expenditure of the Department of Social Security? They expect the Government to review all the various benefits properly, and to ensure that they are targeted. At the same time, members of the public wish us to ensure that NHS expenditure is protected,

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend's comments are very valuable. They come as a breath of fresh air after the question from the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown): I am very grateful.

Investment and Unemployment

2. **Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the relationship between the Budget measures for investment and unemployment levels.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): The Budget measures for business have been warmly welcomed by the business community. They provide an excellent environment for investment and job creation.

Mrs. Campbell: Given that the CBI's industrial trends survey shows that manufacturing firms are still cutting investment, will the Minister tell us what specific steps he will take to promote investment—especially in areas affected by coal pit closures, defence cuts and local authority capping?

Mr. Dorrell: In a week in which the Central Statistical Office has announced that manufacturing output is now rising at an annual rate of 5 per cent.—the House may be interested to learn that it fell by exactly the same amount when Labour was in power between 1974 and 1979—I do not feel disposed to take any lectures from Labour about how to create an environment in which businesses expand and jobs can be created.

The hon. Lady asked what measures had been introduced to promote business investment. Let me list the measures introduced in the Budget and the autumn statement, which have been welcomed by the business community. In those statements, the previous Chancellor increased the amount of export credit available, provided a £2 billion cash flow benefit to British industry through the advance corporation tax changes, abolished car tax, introduced capital allowances and put extra money into the housing market through changes in the housing associations and in the capital receipts regulations for local authorities.

Mr. John Greenway: My hon. Friend the Financial Secretary omitted from that list the £150 million leasing deal for new railway rolling stock, which was announced in the autumn statement and which is much needed to help preserve jobs in the train-making factory in York. Does he agree that the sooner we establish the leasing market for new trains, the sooner more of those who have been made redundant in York and other places can be put back to work? Would it not help that process if the Labour party dropped its objections to the Railways Bill?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The measure to which he refers reflects not only the Government's commitment to investment in railway rolling stock, which my hon. Friend is right to welcome, but, more importantly, the Government's commitment to improving the service available on British railways through the changes to be introduced in the Railways Bill.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Does not the Financial Secretary understand that the minuscule changes to the petroleum revenue tax announced in the Budget will do nothing to safeguard jobs in the oil industry? Is he aware that only yesterday the Association of Offshore Diving Contractors made it clear that there are likely to be about 21,000 job loses? How can he say that he is trying to deal with investment and improve business when he carries out that sort of action which produces high unemployment?

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman's dismissive attitude to the changes that we annnounced yesterday is not reflected by Brindex, which made proposals very similar to those that we announced. As the House knows, the fundamental reason why we are changing the PRT system is that we do not believe that among the many calls on public resources which my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary has to balance we should number subsidising the international oil industry.

Mrs. Peacock: Is my hon. Friend aware that many Yorkshire companies have been investing in new jobs, new factories and new manufacturing processes over the past nine years and that many have continued throughout the recession to invest their own money, not borrowed money? Perhaps he might persuade his colleague, the President of the Board of Trade, to come and look at some of that investment.

Mr. Dorrell I am sure that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is capable of being responsible for his own travel arrangements. If he were to travel to Yorkshire, he would find, as my hon. Friend rightly points out, that British industry is benefiting from the more stable environment that has been created over the past two years as a result of lower inflation, lower interest rates, a more competitive exchange rate and the opportunity for British industry to expand, which the indicators show is now being taken.

Balance of Payments

4. **Mr. Burden:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the balance of payments.

The Paymaster General (Sir John Cope): The visible deficit was much the same in the first quarter of this year as in the fourth quarter of last year. Some deterioration after the movement of the exchange rate is to be expected, but our trade prospects are now very good.

Mr. Burden: Is the Minister aware that the real story is that imports are growing at twice the rate of exports? Would he care to reflect on the report published this week by the Bank for International Settlements which concludes that the Government's failure to invest in manufacturing industry means that there is not enough manufacturing capacity to support even our domestic markets when demand is low. A total of 44 per cent. of manufacturing jobs in the west midlands have been lost since the Government took office. Does not that show how short-sighted the Government have been to ignore the importance of manufacturing industry?

Sir John Cope: We have not ignored the importance of manufacturing industry or manufacturing companies. After all, if the hon. Gentleman had looked at the *Financial Times'* survey of the top 500 companies in Europe, he would have seen that 10 United Kingdom companies were in the top 20 for profitability. That reflects their investment, as does the fact that our export volumes are at record level.

Sir Peter Tapsell: As my right hon. and learned Friend is the 13th Chancellor in whose Question Time I have ventured to pose a question, may I confidently express the hope that he will have a happier tenure of office than his 12 predecessors? Before his officials and special advisers have time to bemuse him with contradictory economic theories and dogma, may I respectfully suggest that he should take a firm grasp of the basic proposition that if we had a large balance of payments surplus it would not matter if we had a large public sector borrowing requirement? In other words, the balance of payments is the critical statistic. So he was absolutely right in his Guildhall speech to stress the importance of helping British industry.

Sir John Cope: I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will be very grateful for my hon. Friend's good wishes, especially as they come from such a wealth of experience, and for the advice that he has given.

Mr. Darling: On the question of growth in our manufacturing base, can we be told when the Chancellor will set out the detailed policy changes which will demonstrate a change in the substance rather than merely the style of his prececessor? Does he not accept that giving more television interviews than his predecessor, or the fact that he has spent most of his life in the midlands, do not in themselves add up to a new industrial policy?

Sir John Cope: We shall set out the changes at the usual time, and particularly in the Budget.

Mr. Evennett: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that our exports to non-EC countries have grown in the past year? Should we not all be congratulating British business and business men for their export achievements?

Sir John Cope: Yes, indeed. I echo my hon. Friend's congratulations. In value terms, exports, excluding oil and erratics, to the whole world were 12½ per cent. higher in the first quarter of this year.

Independent Advisers

5. **Mr. Boyce:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next plans to meet the panel of independent economic advisers to discuss the current state of the economy.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): The panel of independent forecasters will be issuing its second report in early July. I look forward to receiving it.

Mr. Boyce: What advice does the Chancellor think that he will receive which will boost the confidence of the country, given that in the current report the state—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] Yes, that is what I went to school for. The current account deficit was £12 billion when the panel issued its last report. The Government's forecast for the coming year is that the current account deficit will be £15½ billion: what encouraging advice does he think the panel will give him?

Mr. Clarke: I imagine that when I receive the advice of the panel I shall find that it contains the variety of advice to which my hon. Friend the Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell) rightly referred. I accept that we have a balance of payments problem, which is why I am glad that our export performance is improving and that we are doing so well especially in non-EC markets where demand is not depressed as it is in the Community. Certainly, the Government must do everything possible—in my Department and that of my right hon. Friend the President

of the Board of Trade—to support our manufacturers in their efforts to export. Otherwise, I hope that the forecast will take some encouragement from the growth in GDP and manufacturing output and today's fall in the unemployment figures for the fourth successive month.

Mr. Horam: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that there was indeed a warm welcome for what he said in his Guildhall speech about growth and recovery and especially about listening to the views of business men? Is he also aware that business men have for some time been calling for a continuation of the process of lowering interest rates? In as far as my right hon. and learned Friend is able to achieve that and therefore able to enhance and maximise growth, he will ease his own problems with the fiscal balance.

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He sent me a copy of his own interesting suggestions for a policy for industry some months ago, and I have been carrying it around with me ever since. I shall refer to it once more.

One of the things that helps to show the modest signs of recovery is the nine point fall in interest rates which we have achieved recently. It has greatly helped British industry. Clearly, further changes in interest rates can be made only when we have the right circumstances. I set out at the Guildhall the type of circumstances and the type of advice that I would take before deciding on any movement of interest rates.

Mr. Gordon Brown: As the Chancellor has agreed today that the trade deficit is a problem, will he outline the detailed changes in industrial policy that he will introduce? As he said at the Mansion House that achieving higher growth is his objective, what investment in employment measures will he seek to introduce? As the Prime Minister has changed the Chancellor, will the Chancellor now announce the detailed changes in policy so that the country can see action instead of just words?

Mr. Clarke: It is not my intention to pre-empt the work of my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade or my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. All three of us will work in the same direction. My next major contribution will, no doubt, be November's Budget, but I assure the hon. Gentleman that he is facing a business-friendly Government who will take specific measures to sustain British industry and commerce in the recovery that it is beginning to make.

Mr. Willetts: Is not it likely that the panel of experts will be able to show in its next report that Britain is heading for an economic growth rate higher than its inflation rate? Would not that be a remarkable achievement?

Mr. Clarke: It would be a quite remarkable achievement. My hon. Friend will agree that it is important to ensure, first, that that is achieved, in so far as it is within the Government's power to do so, and, secondly, that this time we sustain it, because in the past Britain has done quite well for several periods but has always succumbed to various British diseases that held us up once more.

Mr. Beith: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman recall being advised that interest rate changes should never be made to offset some unfavourable political event? Does he realise that that advice came from the eighth independent adviser, the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont)? Was the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames justified by anything in his term of office in giving that advice, and what is the Chancellor doing to change a system under which that could have happened?

Mr. Clarke: I have set out quite clearly the grounds on which decisions on monetary policy will be taken. I propose to take decisions in the light of the various criteria that I have set out. It is quite right that they should be taken on the best objective advice and for good economic reasons. We will persevere with that, so I do not think that the right hon. Gentleman will have cause for complaint on that ground in the coming months.

Mrs. Gorman: Will my right hon. and learned Friend take note of the very good advice of his adviser, Professor Patrick Minford, who said on the radio today that, as the Government's policy had brought inflation down to almost zero, it is time for us to consider lowering interest rates so that we can get the jobs going again, which would follow from the Government's admirable effort in killing off inflation?

Mr. Clarke: I know Professor Minford from times gone by. I have met him from time to time and have always listened to his advice with care. I know several members of the panel of forecasters, which my predecessor assembled, and they hold a variety of views. I am waiting to receive all their forecasts. I suspect that there will be a fairly wide range of advice, and I shall take careful regard of all of it.

Unemployed People (Cost)

7. **Mr. O'Hara:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will prepare an estimate of the average cost to the Treasury of one unemployed person in terms of *(a)* benefits paid and *(b)* tax revenue lost.

Mr. Dorrell: The net cost to the Exchequer of an individual unemployed person depends on a wide range of variables.

Mr. O'Hara: I am as pleasantly surprised as, no doubt, the Minister about today's slight decrease in the unemployment statistics—which prudent observers, I am sure, will distinguish from a reduction in those who are unemployed and seeking work—but does the hon. Gentleman agree that the cost of each unemployed person, which is authoritatively assessed at approximately £9,000 per year, is the single biggest cause of the ballooning public sector borrowing requirement? Does he agree that the best way to tackle the problem is not to punish unemployed people by reducing benefits but to take positive measures to put them back to work?

Mr. Dorrell: The best way of helping unemployed people is not to speculate on things that are unpredictable and unmeasurable but to create an economy that creates jobs and puts working people back to work. To achieve that, the best thing that the Government can do is to follow the precedent of their record of the 1980s, when manufacturing investment increased by 67 per cent., when the number of jobs created within the economy was 3 million and when manufacturing output rose by 30 per cent. That is the record of this Government between 1982 and 1990, which we wish to recreate.

Mr. Dunn: Does my hon. Friend agree that the one sure-fire way of adding to the cost of unemployment is to sign the social chapter of the Maastricht treaty?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. One of the interesting contrasts to be drawn is that between the record of this country in the late 1980s and that of France during the same period. Our growth rates were roughly the same, but the difference was that in this country we converted that growth into jobs and in France, whose socialist Government espoused the cause of the social chapter, they failed to do so. The House should draw conclusions from that contrast.

Mr. John Evans: Will the Minister confirm that the Conservative Government, whose members constantly go on about sound money, are heading for a deficit of £1 billion a week—£50 billion a year—largely created by the incompetence of the previous three Chancellors?

Mr. Flynn: Hear, hear.

Mr. Evans: My hon. Friend's views are just. Does the Minister accept that the way to cut the appalling deficit is not by slashing welfare payments or by charging the elderly VAT on energy, but by taking a knife to unemployment and getting this country back to work again?

Mr. Dorrell: The split between the two sides of the House is not over the desirability of creating extra jobs and getting unemployed people back to work—that is a shared ambition. The split is over how to achieve it. The hon. Gentleman is right to identify the budget deficit as one of the problems that have to be tackled if we are to deliver the objective that both sides of the House share. I look forward to hearing from him, and even more to hearing from his Front-Bench colleagues, how the Labour party proposes to deliver the reduction in the deficit that we all want.

Mr. Brazier: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the only Governments since the first world war to reduce unemployment have been Conservative Governments? Does he agree that the way to reduce unemployment does not lie through a minimum wage, greater regulation of the labour market or the kind of socialism that has delivered 19 per cent. unemployment in socialist Spain?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the interesting historical fact that it is Tory Governments who cut unemployment and Labour Governments who increase it—just as, incidentally, it is Tory Governments who cut hospital waiting lists and Labour Governments who increase them.

As I said earlier, the best way to get people back to work is to create a vigorous and competitive economy. One of the best bits of news in that regard is the fact that manufacturing productivity is now rising by 7·8 per cent. a year, which means that unit wage costs in manufacturing are falling, for the first time in living memory. Those costs are falling by 2·8 per cent. a year, and that holds out the prospect of improved competitiveness and, therefore, of improved job creation. One would like to think that the Labour party would welcome that.

Mr. Andrew Smith: Will the Financial Secretary confirm that the former Secretary of State for Employment put the cost to the Government of unemployment at £9,000 a year for each unemployed person? Is not the greatest cost of unemployment the cost to unemployed people and their families, and the waste to society of the wealth that their employment would otherwise generate? Are not those costs most corrosive in the case of the 1 million people who have been out of work for more than a year, who loom behind today's welcome fall in the headline unemployment figures? Will the Financial Secretary now tell us what new measures the Government will introduce to counter unemployment and, in particular, what they intend to do to bring work to the long-term unemployed? Will he also examine the case for rebates on national insurance contributions for employers who take on workers from among the long-term unemployed, to whom we must give help?

Mr. Dorrell: Yet again, we have the spectacle of the Labour party recognising that the budget deficit is a problem, although the only ideas that are announced from the Opposition Dispatch Box are those that would have the effect of increasing that deficit. Of course, it is true that unemployment imposes both a social cost on the individuals concerned and an economic cost on the economy as a whole. We have to address the problem of how to make unemployment fall. We believe that the way to do that is by creating a competitive and vigorous economy. That is what we are about and that is what we are constantly being obstructed in doing by the Opposition.

Mr. Matthew Banks: Will my hon. Friend give me an assurance that, while he is considering the cost of unemployment and other benefits during his public spending review, he will continue to do everything in his power to ensure that we continue to provide the most where the need is greatest?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is quite right. That, of course, is precisely the purpose of the review of public expenditure on which my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary is engaged, in order to ensure that, within the public spending total, expenditure reflects today's priorities.

Business Investment

8. **Mr. Betts:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the level of business investment in the economy.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Business investment remains at an historically high level, despite the recession. In 1992, the share of business investment in gross domestic product was over 14 per cent., higher than in any year between 1970 and 1987.

Mr. Betts: Has the Chancellor read the report by the Bank for International Settlements, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden) referred, which shows a major structural weakness in the economy of this country caused by long-term low manufacturing investment? It shows that any recovery is likely to be short lived, since a balance of payments crisis will stop the recovery because of that low level of investment. Will the Chancellor explain to the House what changes in action and policy he will bring about—not words—to rectify the appalling situation

caused by 14 years in which his Government have put manufacturing industry at the bottom of the political agenda?

Mr. Clarke: I regret to say that I do not think that that is historically correct. At the moment, business investment is low because we are just emerging from a recession and are in the early stages of recovery, but there was a substantial investment boom in the latter years of the 1980s. Business investment in this country was up more than 45 per cent. in the three years to 1989, which was the fastest three-year growth since the war. We have a much better record of manufacturing and business investment in this country than there has been historically. I will, of course, consider measures that might sustain that good record once the recovery gets under way.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that one form of assistance that he could give to business investment is not to crowd out the borrowing market by the high level of Government borrowing and that, therefore, one of his key responsibilities must be to get down long-term Government borrowing, which would allow long-term interest rates also to fall?

Mr. Clarke: I wholly agree with my hon. Friend, which is why the Cabinet, in its decision this morning, places such a high priority on getting down as quickly as we can the level of Government borrowing. That message is simply not taken by the Opposition, who merely come forward with opposition to any revenue raising and proposals for more spending. Indeed, in the debate last Wednesday, the Leader of the Opposition would have added £12,000 million to the public sector borrowing requirement by that one speech alone. The interests of industry and manufacturing investment in this country lie in the direction suggested by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Hoon: Before Britain joined the exchange rate mechanism, it was well known that the Chancellor of the Exchequer encouraged membership on the basis that it would assist business investment. Will he argue the same case again?

Mr. Clarke: Our membership of the exchange rate mechanism certainly helped us to achieve the low level of inflation which is one of the best bases for making industry competitive as we move into the recovery. The five-point reductions in interest rates before we left the ERM were as valuable as the four additional point reductions that we have made since we left the ERM. All were based on this Government's success in getting down inflation. We now have to demonstrate the same success in getting down the public sector borrowing requirement.

Housing

9. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measures he has taken to assist the housing market over the last year.

Sir John Cope: We have introduced a number of measures to assist the housing market. The autumn statement announced additional housing measures of £750 million, plus time-limited measures to allow local authorities to spend nearly all their new capital receipts. The Budget doubled the stamp duty threshold to £60,000, and, following the significant easing of monetary policy since last autumn, mortgage rates are now down to their lowest levels for 25 years.

Mrs. Knight: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is interest rates that have the major influence on the housing market? Is it not correct that the low mortgage rates are giving very great encouragement to first-time buyers, the housing market as a whole and the construction industry, as new private housing starts have now increased by 20 per cent?

Sir John Cope: I agree with all that. Private housing starts are up strongly, as are the completions and the particulars delivered. All that is the consequence of the measures that I have outlined, especially mortgage interest rates.

Mr. Raynsford: Will the Minister recognise that, following the short-term increase in spending as a result of the relaxation of restrictions on capital receipts and the housing market package, the rented housing market is likely, once again, to decline this year? Does he now recognise that there is no justification for preventing local authorities from spending capital receipts in the long term? Will he extend the relaxation of the restrictions next year as well as this year?

Sir John Cope: We will not announce anything of that sort at the moment. I notice that new public housing has risen in the first quarter of this year to the highest level for more than eight years. That will greatly help that part of the rented sector.

Mr. Paice: Will my right hon. Friend resist the calls to release those capital receipts in one go? Is it not the case that, however attractive it may be, that would add £6 billion to the bottom line of our public sector borrowing requirement? Labour Members appear to care about that figure.

Sir John Cope: That is indeed the case, and that is why we are cautious about it.

Income Tax and National Insurance

11. **Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average total annual payment in income tax and national insurance per employed person in 1992-93.

Mr. Dorrell: A married man on average earnings of £17,992 would pay £3,107 in income tax and £1,423 in employee's national insurance contributions.

Mr. Milburn: Does the Minister recognise that the March Budget has meant a huge tax hike which will bear down hardest on those who are least able to afford to pay? Will he take this opportunity to tell the House and the public what further tax rises he has in store? Will he now admit that the whole country is being asked to foot the bill for the £10 billion-worth of tax handouts that have been given to the very rich since 1988? Why should the poor, pensioners and NHS patients be asked to pay the price for the Government's extravagance?

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman refers to the record of the 1980s. One might have thought that he would take the opportunity to welcome the increase in the real take-home pay that was available to all people as a result of the

economic policies of the 1980s. Under the Labour Government, real take-home pay for the man on average earnings rose by £1·20 a week at today's values—between 1979 and 1993, it has risen by £81·50 a week. Real take-home pay is what matters, not the statistical analysis offered by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Barry Field: Is it not a fact that no post-war Government have done so much to simplify the personal taxation structure of the United Kingdom as this Government? When my hon. Friend puts the final cornerstone in place in the autumn Budget with regard to future expenditure and taxation plans, I invite him to go a stage further and introduce the reform that is so necessary in the European Community—bringing our pay-as-you-earn year into line with the calendar year. Only Ireland and this country continue with the peculiar date of 5 April.

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is meddling with a long-standing piece of history when he wishes to put the tax system on the same calendar as that by which every one has lived since the 17[illegible], but I shall certainly look at it.

On the more substantive point, my hon. Friend is right to stress that the simplification of the tax system is one of the major steps that the Government have put in place which has encouraged the development of a more competitive and successful economy and delivered the improvement in real take-home pay to which I referred earlier, and which is the bell-wether of success.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Has the Financial Secretary seen the revised parliamentary answer given to me yesterday stating that the number of people who earn less than the basic rate tax threshold but will pay more in national insurance contributions in 1994-95 as a result of the Budget changes is not 500,000, as previously stated, but 2·5 million? Is not he ashamed that 2·5 million of his fellow citizens who are in work but are too poorly paid to have to pay basic rate income tax will still be required to pay extra national insurance contributions as well as extra value added tax on fuel? Can the hon. Gentleman give the House an assurance that that parliamentary answer has not anticipated Government policy—*[Interruption.]*—and called the 20 per cent. band the basic rate band, solely for the purpose of—*[Interruption.]*—restricting allowances?

Mr. Dorrell: It must be a long time since the hon. Gentleman asked a question that secured two cheers while he asked it, particularly one so badly based on the facts. His question reflects the fact that we have increased the personal allowance in real terms by 25 per cent. since 1979. The hon. Gentleman might like to refer also to our change in the system of national insurance contributions for employees, which has reduced the burden on the low paid. It is now a more rational system and more friendly to incentives. The key to a tax system is that it is friendly to incentives and makes it worth while for people to make extra effort. That is the guiding light of our tax policy and will continue to be so.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 17 June.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Evennett: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply. Will he join me in welcoming today's unemployment figures which show the fourth consecutive fall? Does he agree that that is good news for the unemployed, the economy and Britain?

The Prime Minister: Yes; above all, it is good news for those workers and their families who find themselves back in work. I am delighted at the fall of 26,000—the fourth fall in a row. I concede that unemployment remains far too high. It has fallen by nearly 80,000 since the beginning of the year. Equally encouraging, vacancies are at their highest level for two years. A few months ago, many people expected unemployment to rise throughout the year. Instead, it has fallen in Scotland, Wales and every English region.

Mr. John Smith: Can the Prime Minister explain—his Minister was asked this question—why only last week the Department of Social Security claimed that the number of people on low incomes who would be worse off as a result of the national insurance increases in the Budget was only 500,000, but yesterday was forced to admit that that was wrong and the real figure was 2·25 million? What sort of advertisement is that for the competence of his Government or their understanding of the effects that his policies have on so many people?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is operating under a misapprehension. Suggestions of a mistake are wrong. My hon. Friend was asked about the number of people below the basic rate tax threshold who will pay more national insurance in 1994-95. The answer he gave on 7 June related to people whose earnings fall below the 20 per cent. tax band. The answer he gave on 16 June related to people whose earnings fall below the 25 per cent. tax band. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah."] Therefore, naturally the figures are different.

Mr. Smith: The Prime Minister—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must come to order. We must hear not only answers, but questions.

Mr. Smith: The Prime Minister seeks to defend his Department on the basis that it cannot read the questions. The question was the same in both cases, but it received different answers. Leaving that matter aside—*[Laughter.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must come to order. We are using up valuable time.

Mr. Smith: It relates to precisely the same issue. Does the Prime Minister recollect saying on that very issue during that election campaign:

"taxpayers with the lowest incomes will benefit most"?

Why, then, has he imposed a higher national insurance burden on over 2 million low-paid people? Does he admit that, once again, he has broken his word, or was it just another of those throwaway lines delivered on a wet night somewhere in Dudley?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman's suggestion that it might be wise to put that aside is an answer which many people will recall for some time. If he looks at what has happened, he will see that we have raised the threshold for the 20 per cent. band by £500 in the Budget and by a further £500 from next year. Most taxpayers in the lower rate band will gain more from the 20 per cent. lower rate than they will lose from the 1 per cent. increase in national insurance contributions.

Mr. Smith: Does the Prime Minister still not understand, as millions of low-paid people do, that putting 1 per cent. on national insurance for people who do not pay income tax is putting up the tax on their income? Why did he say on page 7 of the Conservative party election manifesto:

"We have reduced the burden of national insurance on low earners"?

Was the whole manifesto written on a wet night somewhere in Dudley?

The Prime Minister: I must tell the right hon. and learned Gentleman that it did not sound any better the second time, so perhaps he should put that aside as well. He should look at what has happened, with the introduction of a 20 per cent. tax band and the raising of a 20 per cent. tax band, and I reiterate—as he clearly did not hear it the first time—that most taxpayers in the lower rate band gain more from the 20 per cent. rate than they lose from the 1 per cent. increase in national insurance contributions. In short—so that the right hon. and learned Gentleman clearly understands—they are better off under our plans than they ever would have been under his plans, which would have involved the largest increase in direct taxation ever seen this century.

Mr. Sims: Has my right hon. Friend had an opportunity to study the current issue of the journal of the Royal Society of Medicine? Is he aware that it includes a survey carried out by a distinguished doctor of general practice in 12 countries in Europe, north America and the far east in which he reaches the conclusion that British is best? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, as we proceed with the implementation of the NHS reforms, that will continue to be the case?

The Prime Minister: The immediate answer to my hon. Friend is no, I have not seen that survey, but, as he has drawn it to my attention, I shall take the opportunity of looking at it. There has been a dramatic improvement both in the resources available to the health services and in the quality of health treatment provided in recent years by the people who work in the service. It is our intention that that should continue—*[Interruption.]*—and I am sorry if the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) thinks that it is nonsense that the people in the health service are providing a better service. I believe that they are.

Mr. Ashdown: Is it not the case that in the 17 or so years since the decision was taken to build THORP—the thermal oxide reprocessing plant—at Sellafield, the economics of THORP have collapsed, the risk of nuclear proliferation has increased, international opposition has hardened and the threshold of safe nuclear emissions has been substantially reduced? Will the right hon. Gentleman undertake that, before a decision is taken to put THORP into operation, the widest possible consultation and debate will be conducted on that dubious project?

The Prime Minister: THORP is a substantial engineering and export success for this country. It supports some 3,000 jobs and has £9 billion-worth of contracts, which is a powerful vote of confidence in the plant from people around the world who will be its customers. As the right hon. Gentleman may know, my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food are considering the inspectors' reports on the proposed new discharge authorisations for the site. The right hon. Gentleman will realise that it would be inappropriate for me to prejudge their considerations.

Mr. Stephen: Is my right hon. Friend aware that visiting the House today is a very special group of 21 men who served this country in the Army, Navy and Royal Flying Corps during the great battles of the first world war? Does my right hon. Friend agree that all of us who live in freedom today owe everything we have to those gallant men and their comrades who died in that most terrible of all wars?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. I have sent a message to those very welcome guests to the House today. I am sure they will be welcomed by everyone in the House.

Q2. **Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 17 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Llwyd: Given the widespread alarm among millions of constituents about the proposed imposition of value added tax on domestic fuel, which will result in an increased incidence of hypothermia and even more poverty among middle-income groups, will the Prime Minister urge his colleagues to reconsider this pernicious and indiscriminate form of indirect taxation? In so doing, he might just assist his albeit fragile, political future.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his concern. We have set out a policy that we believe is correct and we have stated that we will take action to assist vulnerable groups. That assistance will be in place before the extra charges are introduced. The hon. Gentleman utterly fails to mention that the cost of fuel has been falling as a result of our policies, not rising astronomically as it did before we came to office.

Mrs. Roe: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is typically British for commentators and Opposition Members to talk British industry down, yet totally ignore the best manufacturing output figures for five years?

The Prime Minister: I think that my hon. Friend understates her case a little. They do not just talk Britain down—given the chance, they do it down and do it in. Opposition policies would impose an extra tax on jobs and would be no good for British industry. Raising employers' costs and introducing the social charter would be no good for employment prospects or employers. The minimum wage would further damage job prospects. Yet again, the

use of flying pickets would be legalised. [HON. MEMBERS: "Boring."] That is the Labour party's policy. Labour Members may regard my comments as boring, but people in work regard their policy as a job destruction programme.

Q3. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 17 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bennett: Will the Prime Minister join me in congratulating Mr. Pink on winning his case for unfair dismissal against the Stockport health authority? Does he agree that whistleblowers play a very important part in a democracy? Will he urge the Stockport health authority to reinstate Mr. Pink and ensure that resources are available to improve the staffing of the geriatric wards at the hospital in question?

The Prime Minister: I am not aware of the details of the case, but if justice has been done I am delighted.

Q4. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 17 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Fabricant: Following his Cabinet meeting this morning, will my right hon. Friend unequivocally assure the House that—despite the rumours and smears from the Labour party, which preys on the fears of the most vulnerable in our society—the national health service and welfare state always were, are, and for ever will be safe in Conservative hands?

The Prime Minister: As I indicated a moment or so ago, the health service has improved dramatically during recent years, partly as a result of the increased resources made available to it and partly as a result of the activities of the many dedicated people who work in it. I have no doubt that will continue to be the case in the future. *[Interruption.]* It is thriving.

Q5. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 17 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Griffiths: Has the Prime Minister given the President of the Board of Trade a list of the companies that have donated to the Conservative party since 1979? Will the Prime Minister confirm that if the President finds that they have not declared those donations in their accounts, they will all be repaid?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman must understand that British business supports the Conservative party because it believes that our policies are right for British business, the British future and British jobs. Perhaps it is because business understands and applies that test that precious little money from companies goes to the Labour party.

Sir Jim Spicer: Would my right hon. Friend remember today that, over the past year, the wild and sometimes woolly Members of this House have said that the Government should intervene more directly in Yugoslavia? Will he accept the thanks of most sensible Members for all that he and the Government have done, on behalf not only of the United Kingdom but of the world, in not allowing such intervention to take place?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. In my judgment, there is no doubt that it was right to assist with the humanitarian operation, and I believe that the activity of our troops has been widely admired, not just in this country but around the world. They have certainly done a magnificent job.

There are only two ways of settling the dispute. One is to put in hundreds of thousands of troops for an indefinite period—no one wise wants to do that, and no other country would be prepared to do it. The only alternative is to seek a diplomatic solution allied to the humanitarian aid that we and others have been providing. We still seek that diplomatic solution.

I understand that Lord Owen and Mr. Stoltenberg had a useful meeting yesterday with the Presidents of Serbia and Croatia. They will continue their negotiations next week. Lord Owen will brief me on Saturday before I go to the European Council His determined efforts over recent months have done as much as those of any other individual to keep alive the prospect of a political settlement.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): Will the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): Yes, Madam. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 21 JUNE—Conclusion of a debate on a Government motion to approve the defence estimates 1992 (Cm. 1981).

Motion on the Army, Air Force and Naval Discipline Acts (Continuance) Order.

TUESDAY 22 JUNE—Opposition Day (14th allotted day). There will be a debate entitled "The Need for Openness on Funding of Political Parties and the Enforcement of Company Law on Declaration of Political Donations", on an Opposition motion.

WEDNESDAY 23 JUNE—Remaining stages of the Agriculture Bill *[Lords]*.

Motion on the Council Tax Limitation (Wales) (Maximum Amount) Order.

THURSDAY 24 JUNE—Motion on the Northern Ireland Act 1974 (Interim Period Extension) Order.

Motion on the Appropriation (No. 2) (Northern Ireland) Order.

FRIDAY 25 JUNE—There will be a debate on the health and welfare of children on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

MONDAY 28 JUNE—Opposition Day (15th allotted day). Until about 7 o'clock, there will be a debate on a motion in the name of the Liberal Democrats, followed by a debate in the name of Plaid Cymru. The subjects have yet to be announced and, for all I know, to be chosen.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committee A will meet on Wednesday 23 June at 10.30 am to consider European Community documents Nos. 8487/90 and 5902/93 relating to plant variety rights.

[Wednesday 23 June:

European Standing Committee A—Relevant European Community documents: 8487/90, 5909/93 plant breeders' rights; relevant reports of the European Legislation Committee: HC 11-xxxiii (1989-90) and HC 79-xxx (1992-93).]

Mrs. Beckett: I am sure that the Leader of the House recalls that some considerable time ago an agreement was reached with the Procedure Committee that every effort would be made to have a debate in the House in Government time, preferably roughly every six months, before meetings of the European Council. The right hon. Gentleman will know that there is a meeting of the Council in Copenhagen this weekend, and although we recognise that the business of the House has been under some pressure, I hope that that agreement is not being breached and that we may have an undertaking that every effort will be made to arrange debates before these Council meetings so that the House can comment on developments in the European Community. I also hope that we will have a statement in the House following that meeting.

The Leader of the House will also know that hon. Members throughout the House are anxiously awaiting information and statements on assisted area status. I understand that some information may have been transmitted to the European Community. We are anxious for a statement in the House as soon as possible.

The right hon. Gentleman will recall that I have asked on a number of occasions when we are likely to have a proper debate on the public expenditure White Paper that we would normally expect at some stage during the year. It would be most unfortunate, to put it mildly, if that debate were not held before the next public expenditure White Paper is announced in outline in the autumn. I hope that the Leader of the House will bear in mind our many requests on the shape of the public expenditure programme before it is hacked to pieces.

That brings me to the other issue on which we would like a debate in Government time—the Government's plans for invalidity benefit.

The Leader of the House will know that there is pressure for a debate in the House in Government time on the report of the Select Committee on Members' Interests, which has been around for a long time without being debated.

Mr. Newton: For once, I shall take the hon. Lady's requests in their original order. I regret that it did not prove possible to have the six-monthly debate on European matters in advance of the Council meeting, although the House will acknowledge that it has not exactly been starved of opportunities to debate European matters recently. I shall be looking for a suitable opportunity for the debate in the near future—no doubt, in due course, the Opposition will decide to abstain. I expect that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will make a statement at the earliest convenient opportunity after the European Council meeting next week.

The position on assisted area status will be indicated in an answer this afternoon. The Government's proposals were submitted to the European Commission on 15 June, and the proposed new map will be published as soon as Commission approval has been received. Obviously, we want to get on with that as soon as possible, but I cannot give the exact timing at the moment.

I note the right hon. Lady's request for a debate on the public expenditure White Paper, although I cannot add to what I have said on previous occasions. She is, of course, continuing to press me for a flow of Supply days, so I have to make some judgment of priorities as to which of her demands to meet.

The right hon. Lady will certainly have noted what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said at Question Time on Tuesday about our plans for invalidity benefit. Against that background, she will be clear that there are no plans as such to be debated at the moment. The matter is being looked at in the way that my right hon. Friend explained. If and when it is appropriate to have a debate, of course I shall arrange one.

Lastly, on the Select Committee on Members' Interests, I am making reasonably good progress towards the debate that the right hon. Lady and some of her hon. Friends would wish to have.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Select Committee on Home Affairs is looking into the funding of political parties, that it is hearing evidence on the funding of political parties and that it will in due course be producing a report? The effect of the debate on Tuesday, which is

frivolous in the extreme, will be to try to prejudge that report and unduly influence the Committee, which will be considering an extremely serious subject indeed.

Will my right hon. Friend perhaps prevail upon the Opposition not to waste good Supply days on frivolous matters, but to leave this matter to the Home Affairs Select Committee, which will then be able to debate the report? The motion is total nonsense from the Labour party.

Mr. Newton: You will have noted—as I did, Madam Speaker—that, in effect, although that question was properly phrased to be directed at me, it was really directed to the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) and her right hon. Friend the Member for Bishop Auckland (Mr. Foster). I know they have heard it; I hope they will reflect on it. But you will understand, Madam Speaker, as will my hon. Friend, that, although my views coincide with his, I am not in a position to direct the Opposition about the way in which they choose to use their time.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): First, I thank the Leader of the House for his accommodating, if slightly mischievous, announcement of the second of our small entitlement of Opposition days in ten days' time. I can assure him that he will be given the subject in due course.

Following the question of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Liberal Democrats to the Prime Minister, I put it to the Leader of the House that the Government must find time in the near future to debate any potential go-ahead for the THORP project, a subject that has not been debated in the House since 1978. That has the most far-reaching domestic and international implications, and it relates not only to Britain's economy but to our energy and environmental policies and to global matters of proliferation. May we have an undertaking of a debate on THORP before any go-ahead is announced by the Government?

Mr. Newton: I reject out of hand any suggestion that I am ever mischievous. All I did was try, with some success I am glad to say, to raise a small smile on the hon. Gentleman's friendly face.

I cannot promise the hon. Gentleman a debate in the terms that he requests, nor add to the point that my right hon. Friend quite properly made to his right hon. Friend in the course of questions about the current position in which an inspector's report is being considered. But the obvious thought strikes me that, if the hon. Gentleman feels that strongly about it, I have just given him half a day in which he could choose that subject for debate if he so wishes.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Before we proceed further, I remind the House that I now want brisk questions and brisk answers so that I might call as many Members as possible. Many Members are standing today.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): Thank you for calling me, Madam Speaker.

As the Government abolished the Greater London Council, the Inner London education authority and the metropolitan county councils, will the Leader of the House undertake to provide time for a debate in the near future in which Conservative Members might demonstrate and state our total opposition to regional government in any shape or form?

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Yes, we should like that.

Mr. Newton: I cannot make a promise in quite that form, but I shall bear my hon. Friend's request in mind. The only thing that really puts me off is that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) would clearly speak.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): We are happy to have a full day's debate on Northern Ireland next week, but will the Leader of the House bear in mind the fact that, although the report of the Examiner of Statutory Instruments has just been published, there has been a considerable gap in the examination of various statutory instruments in Northern Ireland because of the death of the previous holder of the post? Will the Leader of the House assure me that there will be a debate on that report, which might provide a peg on which to hang some requests for examination of those earlier instruments?

Will the right hon. Gentleman also tell the House what status is accorded by Her Majesty's Government to visits by the President of the Irish Republic to Northern Ireland? They seem to be billed as private visits, but whenever the President is——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman's last question does not relate to business questions. It has nothing whatever to do with the Leader of the House.

Mr. Newton: I would simply say that I imagine that, to a significant degree, the status depends on the basis of the visit. Leaving that aside—hastily, in view of your clear steer, Madam Speaker—I undertake to look into the point that the hon. Gentleman raised.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): As a fellow Essex man, will my right hon. Friend consider giving the earliest consideration to a statement on regional unemployment figures so that it may become clear to people in the mid-Essex area that the fall in unemployment in Braintree and Chelmsford, which was announced today, was the largest fall in a single month in more than six years, with 362 individuals going back into work rather than being in the dole queues?

Mr. Newton: I shall bring that point and that welcome news, which I too noted, to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment if my hon. Friend promises not to call me an Essex man again: last time, for the first time in seven elections, I changed the wording of my election address from "is an Essex man" to "was born and brought up in Essex."

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Leader of the House aware that during the past week it was announced that Rufford—one of the pits in the east midlands, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping)—will close by the end of this financial year, which is in direct contradiction to the statement and pledge that the President of the Board of Trade made to the House several times, because it was one of the 12 pits that were going to be left to be market-tested?

Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for the President of the Board of Trade to make a statement? Failing that,

[Mr. Dennis Skinner]

the Leader of the House should arrange for him to make a personal statement, as the previous Chancellor of the Exchequer did, because he deserves to be sacked for misleading the House and misleading the country.

Mr. Newton: I had anticipated the hon. Gentleman, and I have already arranged for the President of the Board of Trade to be here to answer questions next Wednesday.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Can my right hon. Friend find some time next week for the House to discuss what pressure could be brought to bear on travel agents so that they disseminate information that they receive from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office properly, such as the warnings that holidaymakers should heed before they go to certain parts of the world? I am extremely concerned. My concern was highlighted by the programme "World in Action" on Monday and has certainly been borne out by the murder of many British holidaymakers throughout the world. The information exists, and holidaymakers need to get it; travel agents have it and they are not passing it on.

Mr. Newton: In the light of what he said, my hon. Friend's concern is understandable. The appropriate course is for me to bring his comments to the attention of my right hon. Friends for their consideration.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Apparently there is some monkey business under way as regards the Museums and Galleries Commission. When can we have a statement as to what plots are afoot as regards this matter?

Mr. Newton: I shall bring that matter to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage, and I am sure that he will communicate with the hon. Gentleman if he has intelligence to impart about any problem.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): My right hon. Friend will no doubt be aware of the encouraging statistics issued yesterday which show a record proportion of young people going on to further or higher education—an all-time record. May we have a debate so that we can discuss the impact of standards and compare the recent report by Ofsted, which showed that tests led to a significant improvement in teaching and learning environments in schools, with the comments made on last year's tests by the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), the shadow spokesman on education, who regarded them as totally worthless? That shows how far from reality she is on the matter.

Mr. Newton: I agree with the latter point, and also with the first point about the satisfaction we all feel about the great increase in the number of young people going on to further and higher education. As to the middle matter, my hon. Friend will be aware that the Education Bill is under consideration in another place. I am sure that there will be further opportunity for discussion there.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Has the Leader of the House had an opportunity to look at early-day motion 2138 about air pollution in London?

[That this House is deeply concerned at the appalling quality of air in London, particularly during hot and still weather; believes that the high incidence of bronchial illness and child asthma is related to this and that the major sources of polluted air are private cars; and therefore calls for urgent Government action to improve public transport and reduce wasteful commuter motoring.]

Can he give an undertaking that there will be an urgent and early debate on the need to restore democratically elected government to London so that the city's future can be properly planned, its transport infrastructure properly developed, the amount of commuter motoring reduced and air quality and the life of Londoners improved? Does he not think that it is a disgrace that this is the only capital city with no unified elected local authority?

Mr. Newton: The answer to that is no. I understand that there is an opportunity to discuss the matters raised in the first part of the question in an Adjournment debate this evening.

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): Can the Leader of the House reassure us that there will be no repetition of the shambles that overtook the ministerial statements on Monday? You will recall, Madam Speaker, that the Secretary of State for Wales made a comprehensive statement about flooding devastation in Wales and that, after a long discussion, the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment attempted to make a statement, without warning, on the equal devastation and loss of life that has occurred in Cornwall and other parts of the west country. Can we be reassured that, in future weeks, there will not be such a difficulty and that we shall have a comprehensive statement of all the effects of flooding, what the Government intend to do and what the National Rivers Authority is doing about flood defence and flood warning systems?

Mr. Newton: On any occasion on which natural disasters or difficulties occur, some regard must necessarily be paid to the scale in determining whether or not it is appropriate to make a statement. The scale of the flooding in Wales exceeded that in most other parts of the country.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): In the wake of the Prime Minister's meeting with the Taoiseach of the Irish Republic, does the Leader of the House agree that it is time that we had a full debate on the workings of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which has been in place for eight years? In 1985, we were told that the agreements would produce peace, stability and reconciliation. Does the right hon. Gentleman acknowledge that all we had from the most recent meeting with the Taoiseach was a repetition of a harsh, aggressive and irredentist territorial claim?

Mr. Newton: This matter is for you, Madam Speaker, but I would be surprised if the full day of debating Northern Ireland on Thursday, 24 June—on some fairly wide-ranging motions—did not permit subject matter of that kind to be introduced.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Is the Leader of the House aware of the havoc that the internal market is wreaking on the national health service? Will he consider what is occurring at centres of excellence such as the Billericay burns unit, which I am sure the right hon. Gentleman knows very well? Since the internal market was introduced, the superb team at the unit only undertake emergency and urgent cases and not elective surgery, because the funds for that are not available. May we

debate urgently centres of excellence and others, such as Killingbeck, which is having to close because there is insufficient money under that stupid, crazy system?

Mr. Newton: I do not accept the hon. Lady's description of what is occurring, but I will of course bring her observations to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Has the Leader of the House read early-day motion 2175?

[That this House expresses concern that Home Office statistics show that 100,000 young people under 21 years were either convicted or cautioned for drunkenness in 1990; is alarmed that Department of Transport figures for 1989 indicate that about 25,000 injury accidents are associated with driving over the legal limit for alcohol and that overall 20-25 per cent. of road deaths occur in accidents where at least one driver is beyond the legal limit; condemns the marketing executives and administrators who have sold the England and Australian Cricket teams to breweries; and finds the use of beer advertisements on players and on grounds morally offensive and the subjugation of a once fine sport to such unscrupulous profiteering especially nauseating.]

It highlights the potentially adverse effects of alcohol on young people, with 100,000 under-21s convicted or cautioned for drunkenness in 1990, and expresses opposition to the idea that the English and Australian cricket teams should be sold to the breweries for advertising purposes. Is it not time to stop that nauseating invasion of our screens by enforcing the BBC charter? It is not meant to broadcast advertisements and it is unfair, wrong and illegal for it to do so in that way—and offensive into the bargain.

Mr. Newton: I am sure that the broadcasting authorities will take note of the hon. Gentleman's comments. It is worth noting that, thanks to significant efforts, road deaths involving alcohol more than halved in the last decade. The Department of Transport is launching a major television campaign against drinking and driving on 29 June.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Will the Leader of the House arrange a debate on opencast mining? Is he aware that my constituents are outraged by British Coal's proposals to opencast at Wintersett and North Featherstone—so ravaging what little countryside remains there—at the same time that British Coal is closing local productive pits?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman referred to "proposals". Presumably that means that there is scope for a considerable public inquiry before any decision is made. That would be the right approach for the hon. Gentleman to adopt.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Next Tuesday's debate could not be more relevant, given what has been happening with political funding. I was told by the Attorney-General, in reply to my questioning, that seven Tory Members made representations on behalf of Mr. Nadir. Could the four who remain unidentified be named in next Tuesday's debate, and reasons for their representations given on the Floor of the House? Those representations had no constituency purpose. How much more corruption are we to learn of from that case?

Mr. Newton: I understand why the hon. Gentleman feels it necessary to stir the issue in that way, but I doubt whether right hon. and hon. Members on either side of the House really think that it would be appropriate to make public every occasion on which constituency Members, quite properly, ask for information about a case following an approach from their constituents.

Mr. Paddy Tipping (Sherwood): There is a widespread feeling of betrayal among people working in the mining industry in Nottinghamshire and, indeed, throughout the country. Does the Leader of the House understand that those people will not be reassured by the fact that the President of the Board of Trade will be here to answer questions on Wednesday? What they want to know is why, only last March, assurances were given about the future of pits. That was a political fix, which is now coming unstuck. The President of the Board of Trade should be here to apologise to us, and to those miners and their families.

Mr. Newton: As I have said, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade will be here next week, although I cannot undertake to ensure that he will address the hon. Gentleman in the terms that he invites.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Has the Leader of the House read the story in the current issue of "Private Eye" which states that, between 1984 and 1990, Mr. Asil Nadir was entertained at No. 10 Downing street on six occasions as an honoured guest of Margaret Thatcher? Now that the right hon. Lady is away from here and it is safe to come out and talk about such matters, may we please have a debate about the contacts and the relationship between Margaret Thatcher and Asil Nadir?

If we can prove that there is something nasty there, perhaps she will also do a runner to northern Cyprus—which will undoubtedly bring smiles to the faces of some Conservative Members, and great delight to the nation as a whole.

Mr. Newton: As it happens, I have not seen the piece in "Private Eye"; no doubt it will be studied carefully.

Let me point out that we are talking about a period during which, as far as I am aware, there was no particular reason to suspect the existence of the problems that have been indentified more recently. I have before me a note that probably relates to roughly the same period: it states that, at the time, both Polly Peck and Unipack Plastics Ltd. were giving money to such bodies as the Spastics Society, the Royal Opera House and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. The atmosphere was quite different from that which now exists.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): At the Edinburgh conference of European Community Heads of State, it was decided to lift the veil of secrecy from some operations within the Council of Ministers by publishing the votes that took place at its meetings. I was told in a letter from the right hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones)—who was then a Minister—and in a parliamentary answer from the Prime Minister that all parliamentary answers relating to the Council's meetings and published in *Hansard* would include the details of votes, and give a nil record if no vote had taken place. However, that is not happening in the bulk of Departments. Will the Leader of the House ensure that it is done? It will undoubtedly assist us when European Community matters are debated in the House.

Mr. Newton: I am aware of the general move towards greater openness; indeed, that was one of the matters advanced by the British Government at the Birmingham council, and we are anxious for it to proceed further. I shall look into the specific points that the hon. Gentleman has raised.

Mr. Alan Simpson (Nottingham, South): Will the Leader of the House find time for a debate on the Government's proposals for changes in the affordability rules affecting housing associations? Only today, associations from the whole of the east midlands have been attempting to set out the clear consequences of the proposed change. They would raise the average rent to £85 a week, force low income earners out of housing association properties, terminate the flow of private finance into housing association building and bring about a huge increase in the housing benefit bill, which must be met by the country as a whole.

Mr. Newton: I cannot undertake to find time for such a debate in the immediate future, but I can and will undertake to bring the hon. Gentleman's anxieties to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Has the right hon. Gentleman's attention been drawn to a recent report by the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights in Northern Ireland, which severely criticises the way in which the people of Northern Ireland have been deprived of their civil and human rights because of the way in which the House deals with Northern Ireland legislation? Will the right hon. Gentleman, as custodian of the House in this regard, respond positively to the report in the near future?

Mr. Newton: I note the hon. Gentleman's request. There has not been deficient representation from Northern Ireland this afternoon, because three hon. Members have addressed me from the Bench on which the hon. Gentleman is sitting. The hon. Gentleman will have a further opportunity to raise those points during the debate next Thursday.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Does the Leader of the House realise that the anxiety about the thermal oxide reprocessing plant is not confined to one group, but is spread to every corner of the House and throughout the country and the world? That is shown by early-day motion 2174 and several others.

[That this House welcomes the 12 to 1 majority vote of the Paris Commission Convention on The Control of Pollution of the Seas, at its meeting in Berlin on 16th June, to adopt further measures including the application of best available techniques for the reduction or elimination of inputs of radioactive substances to the maritime area and its further agreement that a new or revised discharge authorisation for radioactive discharges from nuclear reprocessing installations should only be issued by national authorities if special consideration is given to: (a) information on the need for spent fuel reprocessing and on other options, (b) a full environmental impact assessment, (c) the demonstration that the planned discharges are based upon the use of the best available techniques and observe the precautionary principle and (d) a consultation with the Paris Commission on the basis of (a), (b) and (c) above. Deplores the refusal of the United Kingdom Government alone to support this decision; believes this Paris Commission decision will rightly have serious implications for Sellafield; and demands that this decision be fully taken into account in the present considerations on Thorp.]

Does he not realise that, if Thorp is commissioned, it will mean a ninefold increase in radioactive pollution in the Cumbrian area and will leave a legacy of nuclear waste that will be a nightmare and a burden to our grandchildren's grandchildren? During the debate in 1978, assurances were given by every party that this would not go on without a further debate. The rationale for Thorp was to use its production for the fast breeder reactor. That has been cancelled, and we must have a debate.

Madam Speaker: Order. I ask hon. Members to co-operate in putting only one question, not their arguments at this time. We can then make some progress.

Mr. Newton It will not surprise you, Madam Speaker, or the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) when I say that I have already commented on that this afternoon, as has my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I cannot add to that now.

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): Will the Leader of the House accept that some Labour members of the Home Affairs Committee welcome the debate on Tuesday? Will he draw to the attention of the Minister leading for the Government our concern that there should be a reference to the responsibilities of Ministers when they go on foreign trips paid for by the taxpayer? The Committee has received evidence that the Prime Minister took time off from official functions in order to touch foreign business men for donations to the Tory party, and that other Ministers may have done the same.

Mr. Newton: I sometimes think that the propensity of Opposition Members to throw such allegations so easily about the Floor of the House is deplorable. I am conscious of the fact—there is practical evidence of it in jobs in various parts of the country—that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's efforts to ensure that foreign business men do business with British companies, buy British products and create British jobs have been among the great successes of his visits.

Mr. Jim Dowd (Lewisham, West): The Leader of the House will be aware that the report of the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice is to be published in the near future. Can he give some indication of what preliminary arrangements have been made for its contents to come before the House? While making those arrangements, will he make representations to his appropriate right hon. Friends to ensure that the report includes consideration of the serious shortcomings revealed by the case against my constituents, Lisa and Michelle Taylor, who were freed by the Court of Appeal last Friday?

Mr. Newton: I cannot dictate to the royal commission what matters it should choose to consider and comment upon. I am not in a position to say when the report will be published. In those circumstances, I can hardly make a statement about how it will be dealt with.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Is the Leader of the House aware of early day-motion 1874, which refers to Croatian army atrocities in Bosnia-Herzegovina?

[That this House recognises the horrific consequences of the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina and condemns the perpetration of massacres against civilians by all sides whether they be Serb, Croat or Muslim; is appalled by most recent reports of Croatian Army atrocities against Muslim civilians in Jablenica, Vitez, Jelinak, Armici, Zenica and many surrounding villages which have been witnessed by officers and men of the Cheshire Regiment and calls on Croat authorities to end, forthwith, attacks against local civilians; calls for all regular Croatian Army troops to withdraw from Bosnia-Herzegovina; and simultaneously urges Her Majesty's Government to discuss, with other Members of the Security Council, an appropriate response by the international community.]

In the light of the fact that *The Daily Telegraph* journalist, Patrick Bishop, and a British soldier serving with the UN force in Bosnia were wounded this morning by a remote-controlled landmine in the region of Travnik where Croatian soldiers are active, could we have a statement from a Minister about relations between this country and Croatia?

Mr. Newton: I cannot undertake to ensure an immediate statement of that sort. I note the unhappy news that the hon. Gentleman has communicated about that incident. He will know that we fully support the Security Council's statement of 21 April and other things that have been done subsequently to protest to the President of Croatia about the renewed violence and call upon him to use his influence to stop it.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Has the Leader of the House caught sight of early-day motion 2171, signed by 169 Members across the House, which calls for the cleaning up of the former United Kingdom atomic test site at Maralinga in South Australia?

[That this House welcomes the visit of Mr. Gareth Evans, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs and his Ministerial colleague, Mr. Simon Crean and their meetings with the Foreign Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence; expresses the hope that these meetings will lead to an early agreement being reached between the Federal Government of Australia and Her Majesty's government concerning the final cleaning up of the former United Kingdom atomic test site at Maralinga, South Australia; reminds both governments that they are jointly responsible for this matter and that the Aboriginal people of the Maralinga-Tjarutja have pursued the objective of the restoration of their traditional lands in an honourable, dignified and peaceable way; and therefore urges the two governments to respond in like manner, thereby bringing this issue to a conclusion which meets the legitimate needs and interests of the Maralinga people.]

Is it not the case that Gareth Evans, the Foreign Affairs Minister of the Federal Australian Government, has a meeting this afternoon with the Foreign Secretary at which they will discuss this very matter? May I impress on the Leader of the House the need for an early statement from our Foreign Secretary about it, as he will surely agree that the honourable and decent people of the Maralinga-Tjarutja require nothing less than that our Government and the Federal Government of Australia clean up their traditional tribal lands?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman is right. The Australian Ministers for Foreign Affairs, for Primary Industries and for Energy are in this country and are meeting my right hon. Friend to discuss the matter. Indeed, there must be nearly as many members of the Australian Government in Britain as there are members of the British Government, judging by the numbers I have met—and very genial they and the members of the Australian Opposition are.

As for the subject that the hon. Gentleman has rasied, both Governments are keen to reach a mutually satisfactory solution as soon as possible, and my right hon. Friend will be reporting the outcome of the meeting to the House.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Does the Leader of the House realise that it is ages since the Secretary of State for Scotland produced his White Paper on the options for water and sewage in Scotland and that, during the consultation period, representations against privatisation have been flooding in, including many from Scottish Conservatives?

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, in today's Scottish *Daily Express*, there is what looks like a Scottish Office inspired story, which reveals the form in which the Secretary of State is going to announce the future of Scottish water? As I know that you, Madam Speaker, are always concerned that statements should be made to the House, not in the newspapers in the form of leaks or in any other way, will the Leader of the House ask the Secretary of State for Scotland to make a statement to the House next week, or as soon as possible, on the outcome of the consultation on the future of Scottish water and sewage?

Mr. Newton: When there is an outcome to the consultation, I am sure that my right hon. Friend will wish to make an appropriate statement to the House. However, at the moment, there is not, and I therefore cannot promise a statement next week. Nor can I promise a statement on every piece of speculation that appears in the Scottish or United Kingdom press.

Statement on the Defence Estimates

[Relevant documents: First Report of the Defence Committee on the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1992 of Session 1992-93, HC 218; Fifth Report of the Defence Committee on Army Commitments and Resources: the Government's Response and Army Manpower Statement of 3rd February 1993, HC 731 of Session 1992-93.]

4.7 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I beg to move,

That this House approves the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1992 contained in Cm. 1981.

I very much welcome the fact that some Opposition Members below the Gangway have tabled their own amendment to the motion. I congratulate them on their clarity and consistency and I can only regard it as unfortunate that the official Opposition appear to have departed from their previous views without having anything to replace them. This is an opportunity for the House to discuss not only last year's White Paper on the defence estimates but a range of other defence issues.

I begin by paying a personal tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton) who, until very recently, was a most distinguished Minister for the Armed Forces and who, for a number of years, made a valuable and important contribution to the well-being of our armed forces, something which I believe will stand the test of time.

It is important that the House should have opportunities not only to debate these matters but to do so in a well-informed fashion. We shall soon be publishing the next defence estimates—the next White Paper—which are likely to be before the House in early July. I hope that it will be possible to debate that White Paper more quickly than it has been possible to debate this one, especially because, although I do not wish to anticipate the contents of that White Paper, I believe that the House, the armed forces and the country as a whole will find it a very informative document which will provide much information that has not before been made available to the House or the country and which will seek to present all the work of the Ministry of Defence in such a way as to make a substantial and important contribution to the proper discussion and understanding of the role of the armed forces, the tasks that they have to carry out, the way in which they meet their tasks, various elements of the forces' structure and how the very large resources available to the Ministry of Defence are used.

I begin by reporting to the House the situation in Bosnia and the role of our armed forces in the former Yugoslavia at the present time. May I offer what I am sure are the congratulations of the House as a whole to those members of our armed forces who appeared in Her Majesty's honours list recently and who received well-deserved recognition for the work that they have been doing in that country. Those who received awards for gallantry and for exceptional leadership deserve to be especially proud of what has been achieved.

The Bosnian Serb rejection of the peace plan, developed by Lord Owen and Mr. Vance and accepted by the Bosnian Croats and Muslims, has been a serious setback to the achievement of a negotiated political settlement, which offers the only prospect of an end to the conflict. Sooner or later, the Bosnian Serbs will have to come back to the negotiating table. Sanctions against Serbia will be applied vigorously until she brings an undoubted influence to bear to that end.

In the meantime, in the absence of a settlement, fighting has worsened between Croats and Muslims in central Bosnia where the British battalion group is deployed as part of the United Nations protection force in its humanitarian task. As the House knows, that task is the provision of protective support for humanitarian aid convoys, under the auspices of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and for convoys of released detainees under the auspices of the Red Cross.

In the past week there have been serious incidents involving our forces. Last Thursday, 10 June, near Kiseljak, six British personnel were forced out of their Spartan vehicles at gun point and robbed of their weapons and their equipment. Last Friday morning, 11 June, near Novitravnik, British forces had to open fire in self-defence against Bosnian-Croat troops who engaged them while they were protecting a Muslim convoy. On 11 June a sentry at Vitez fired in self-defence at a sniper and there is reason to believe that the assailant was killed.

Those are serious and disturbing incidents. The United Nations and British commanders will make whatever changes they consider necessary in their procedures and dispositions in the light of developments on the ground and will have the Government's full support. For their part, the Government have kept and are keeping the safety of our forces under constant review.

Even before the incidents that I have described occurred, I announced on 10 June new measures that we were taking to ensure that we were ready to provide additional protection for our troops if that became necessary. For several months we have maintained contingency plans to provide additional protection for our forces should circumstances warrant it, through both maritime and land-based assets. To complement those existing arrangements, I announced that a number of Army units and individual officers and men were being placed at readiness to move to the former Yugoslavia at short notice to provide a range of options should the need to protect our forces make that necessary.

We have placed at readiness a range of capabilities that can be drawn on selectively according to the needs of the situation. No troops are being sent to the theatre at this stage, apart from a small number of personnel who will be required for ground-to-air command and control functions in connection with the provision of air support. HMS Ark Royal remains in the Adriatic sea with her Sea Harriers and Sea King helicopters embarked. We hope that it will not be necessary to deploy those capabilities, but the Government will not hesitate to reinforce our battalion group if required, either to enable it to continue with its current task or to assist with the withdrawal of United Nations forces if it came to that.

As we have already made clear, the units that we have on standby would not be sent to undertake any new mandate. We are already a leading contributor to UNPROFOR's Bosnian command and there are more British soldiers in Bosnia than there are from other United Nations countries. It will be clear to the House that British troops are fully committed in fulfilling their current humanitarian task. The provision of additional forces to enable the safe areas concept in Security Council resolution 836 must be a matter for other nations. We very much hope that those resources will be forthcoming.

The safe areas concept is part of the joint action programme agreed between the United Kingdom, the United States, France, Russia and Spain in Washington on 22 May. Implementing the concept is an important immediate step to help stabilise the situation on the ground, relieve suffering and create an improved climate for further work to achieve a negotiated settlement. Neither Britain nor the other co-sponsors of the resolution regards safe areas as a permanent solution or an end in themselves.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Even as we debate the matter, at least one of those safe areas, Gorazde, is being subjected to continued aggression by Serbia. My right hon. and learned Friend mentioned Croatia and the Muslims. Will he emphasise the fact that great brutality is still being perpetrated by the Serbs in Bosnia?

Mr. Rifkind: I have to confirm that fact. There have been incidents of brutality involving all communities in this ghastly conflict. I acknowledge my hon. Friend's comment that Serbia has a particular responsibility and has been involved in a number of the most serious incidents.

Safe areas are a temporary measure to help to create a climate in which renewed efforts to help a lasting and equitable peace can make progress, building on the work of Lord Owen and Mr. Vance. The Security Council resolution has given UNPROFOR a mandate in six areas: to deter attacks; to monitor the ceasefire; to promote the withdrawal of military or paramilitary units other than Bosnian Government units; and to occupy some key points on the ground in addition to participating in the delivery of humanitarian relief.

The resolution authorises member states acting nationally or through regional organisations or arrangements to use air power in support of UNPROFOR carrying out its mandate in and around the six designated safe areas. NATO has agreed to take on the task in support of, and in close co-ordination with, the UN as an extension of its current operations to enforce the no-fly zone. I announced on 10 June that the Government have offered a squadron of Royal Air Force Jaguar aircraft to participate in such an operation. We are closely in touch with NATO about the detailed arrangements for the operation and I shall keep the House informed.

The House will want to join me in paying tribute to the courage and professionalism of all our forces involved in operations in and around the former Yugoslavia. We are well aware of the impressive scope of those operations. Royal Navy ships and Royal Air Force aircraft are taking part in operations to enforce sanctions against Serbia and the arms embargo against the whole former Yugoslavia and to enforce the no-fly zone in Bosnia.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): How effective is the increased effort to tighten sanctions proving to be? That is germane to the question whether there should be more or less military intervention.

Mr. Rifkind: Sanctions are having a very considerable effect on the Serbian economy. President Milosevic sees the effect of sanctions as very damaging to the economic prospects of the country. There is massive inflation, vast unemployment and a huge fall in manufacturing production. That is, in part, why Mr. Milosevic sought to persuade the Bosnian Serbs to support the Owen-Vance proposals. The sanctions will continue until we can be satisfied that sufficient progress has been made.

The battalion group that has been involved in our humanitarian operations has been very successful and can claim to have been responsible for the saving of many tens of thousands of lives. Those who advocate the lifting of the arms embargo in favour of the Muslims or intervention against one party or the other must realise that to do so would bring the humanitarian operation to an end. I repeat, however, that we shall not hesitate to take whatever steps may be necessary for the safety of our forces and the House can rest assured that this is, and will continue to be, our paramount consideration.

The possible participation of South Africa in the anniversary celebrations of the Royal Air Force has given rise to some interest in the House and in another place. I am pleased to announce that South Africa will be invited by the Royal Air Force benevolent fund to send a transport plane to attend the Fairford international air tattoo. South Africa's association with the Royal Air Force is long-standing. Indeed, the RAF's existence as a separate service owes much to Field Marshal Smuts. We have, therefore, concluded that this association should be marked with the participation of a non-combat plane in the air tattoo to mark the RAF's 75th anniversary year.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Does the Secretary of State think it entirely appropriate to have a South African military presence in this country when South African armed units are attacking Government positions in Angola in defiance of a United Nations resolution and of the clearly expressed wish of the Angolan people for peace?

Mr. Rifkind: The involvement of the South African navy in the recent services relating to the battle of the Atlantic was warmly welcomed by all shades of opinion in South Africa, including the people most representative of black opinion. We are now in a new situation and it is right and proper for us to respond in the way that I have described.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): I do not wish to expand much further on the point, but just to establish the facts clearly for the record, during the second world war a vast number of South Africans volunteered, against the wishes of some of the more Boer elements in South Africa, to come here and many lost their lives on behalf of this country. The whole point of the commemoration is that it is about those people, not about what may be going on politically today.

Mr. Rifkind: That is absolutely correct. We can never forget the contribution made by those brave South Africans, many of whom sacrificed their lives. When we are commemorating the history of the Royal Air Force it is right and proper that that contribution should be taken into account. As my hon. Friend says, that does not represent a political comment on any contemporary difficulties that may be continuing in South Africa today.

We are all conscious of the fact that the armed forces are going through one of the most radical reorganisations since 1945 and I pay tribute to the people, both civilians and members of the armed forces, who are having to

[Mr. Rifkind]

supervise a difficult period of transition and who are doing so with the customary spirit and dedication that we expect to see in the armed forces.

I note that some Opposition Members, although not Front-Bench Members, have tabled an amendment calling for a major reduction in our defence expenditure, echoing the calls of the Labour party conference for defence expenditure to be drastically pruned. When those hon. Members say that our defence expenditure should be reduced to the level of that in other European countries, perhaps they have not fully examined what the other countries with which one might most easily compare the United Kingdom spend on defence. For example, when one compares the defence expenditure of the United Kingdom with that of France and Germany one finds an almost uncanny similarity in the total sums made available. Expressed in pounds sterling, United Kingdom defence expenditure in 1992 was about £24·4 billion; that of France was £25·8 billion; and that of Germany almost exactly £24 billion. An almost identical amount was being spent by those three major countries. Furthermore, the United Kingdom has some special responsibilities, such as our commitment to Northern Ireland and our continuing obligations to defend our dependent territories. The responsibilities associated with our being a nuclear power —a factor that we share with France—also have to be taken fully into account.

We have also seen a dramatic improvement in the ability of the United Nations to meet various international challenges and it is well worth remembering the increased contribution that the United Nations is making to easing some of the problems of security and peacemaking in various parts of the world. Since January last year, when only 12,000 United Nations forces were involved in various operations around the world, the figure has increased so that today about 60,000 United Nations forces are engaged in United Nations operations. That increase has profound implications and it is now time for the United Nations to consider whether at the heart of its activity it has sufficient military advice and personnel to assist the Secretary-General to develop and co-ordinate the many military operations with which the organisation is associated. Increasing attention needs to be given to that question.

It is also important to ensure that countries invited to contribute to United Nations operations should not be expected to be committed to supporting the United Nations in any particular theatre for as long as support may be required. Sometimes that may involve a period of many years—for example, we have now been in Cyprus for more than 25 years—and it is not realistic to expect the small number of countries which provide the bulk of United Nations support to give such an open-ended commitment on an ongoing basis. Much more sensible is the principle of rotation, as that enables another country to be brought in for a period of time, thereby helping to spread the burden in a realistic and sensible way.

I want today to make some very important comments with regard to the use of our reserve forces, because I believe that they have a crucial contribution to make and I know that they are a matter of considerable interest to many hon. Members.

I know that the House will join me in paying tribute to the contribution that has been made over the years by members of our reserve forces. The willingness of men and women to give up their spare time to serve the Crown has been warmly welcomed and on many occasions has proved to be vital.

In March 1992 we issued an open Government document on the future of Britain's reserve forces which set out proposals for the more flexible use of reserves, permitting their use in a wide range of types of operation. That document proposed legislation in the 1994-95 Session and we have that objective firmly in mind. Since that document was issued, the change in the international situation has provided us with the opportunity to introduce new roles for the reserves. At the same time it has become clear that standing reserve forces are no longer required for certain current roles.

Against that background we have been looking in detail at the structure of the reserves of all three forces. Today I shall be announcing the results of our detailed deliberations on the future of the Navy's reserves and our latest proposals for the RAF reserves. We are also re-examining the operational requirement for the Army's reserves and hence the size and shape of the Territorial Army. I shall be making a further announcement on that later in the year.

Before I come to the detail of our proposals on the Royal Navy and the RAF, there are a number of basic principles which I should set down and which underpin our thinking on all three services. First, I must place on record my personal commitment to the future of our reserve forces. Reserves in all three services will play a continuing crucial role in providing support to their regular colleagues.

Secondly, I believe that we should bring up to date the roles of the reserves where they are no longer relevant to our changing defence needs. It is in no one's interest, not least that of the reservists themselves, that they should be expected to carry out roles which, although vital in the past, no longer require standing forces. That would breed frustration and disillusion.

Thirdly, and most important of all, I believe that the time has come to make arrangements to deploy reserves much more widely in operational roles in peacetime. I regard this point as particularly important. In the past, with only a few exceptions, we have called out reservists only at times of heightened tension or in war. We are now moving to a world where the possibility of major confrontation is less than it has been for many years, but where the demands placed on our forces for peacekeeping and related tasks have never been greater. Furthermore, I know of the frustration felt by many reservists that their skills were not used during the Gulf war, when their American counterparts were deployed in such large numbers. Today, hundreds of Canadian volunteer reserves are serving in Cyprus, Cambodia and Somalia; and in the former Yugoslavia Canadians are joined by hundreds of Danish reserves.

I can see no reason why we, too, should not plan to deploy our reservists in peacetime. I am therefore looking in detail at the possibilities, particularly as we consider the proposed new reserve forces legislation. One specific idea is that we might use volunteers from the TA to form units or sub-units to contribute on a planned basis to operational commitments undertaken by the regular Army. The feasibility of attaching a composite TA

infantry company composed of volunteers to regular units undergoing United Nations tours is being examined, with a view to running a pilot scheme in late 1994. I shall say more about this when I come to report on the future of the Territorial Army later in the year. I regard it as a very significant and welcome development. I want similar opportunities to be available to naval and air force reservists. I believe that in this way we shall ensure that the reserves are given more relevant, more important and more fulfilling jobs to do and that the link between reserves and regular forces will be strengthened thereby.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): I am sure that the announcement that we have just heard about the enhanced role and status of the Territorial Army service overseas will be warmly welcomed on both sides of the House. Can my right hon. and learned Friend reassure the House that, in the further consideration that he is giving to the role of the TA, he will give consideration to the concept of ever-readies, which has often been advanced in the House, so that we can see across the broad stream of activity the TA playing an even greater role in helping to sustain our armed forces?

Mr. Rifkind: I thank my hon. Friend for his comments. Any use of the reserves for operational roles in peacetime must be based on the fact that they would be volunteers —they would have made it clear that they were keen to be used for such a role if it should become available. Over the next few months, we will be working on the detailed way in which the objectives will be translated into specific structures to bring that about.

I come to the detailed proposals for the future of the Royal Naval Reserve. The proposals to which I am about to refer are, of course, subject to consultation. No final decisions will be taken until the process is complete.

First, I should make it clear that we have no plans for changes to the Navy's ex-regular reserves, other than to match the greater opportunities for women within the Royal Navy to the same reserve liability as their male colleagues. Currently numbering some 24,000, those ex-regulars would, if necessary, provide the great bulk of reinforcement to the Royal Navy. Each year, some 2,000 highly trained personnel leave the Royal Navy and provide a readily usable pool of ex-regular reserves. Any degradation of their skills can be recovered through refresher training.

For the naval volunteer reserves, the proposals are the culmination of studies that were announced to the House by my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell on 24 July 1991. The main aim of those studies was to achieve closer integration of the Royal Naval Reserve with the operational activities of the Royal Navy. As hon. Members know, the Royal Navy's volunteer reserve forces comprise the Royal Marine Reserve, the Royal Naval Reserve and the Royal Naval Auxiliary Service. The principal role of the Royal Marine Reserve is to provide training reinforcements to bring the marine commandos to full war strength on mobilisation. That is an important and continuing role. We have no current plans for changes to the Royal Marine Reserve.

Two of the major roles of the naval volunteer reserves during the cold war have been the defence of ports and anchorages and the manning of the Naval Control of Shipping organisation. Those tasks have been undertaken jointly by the Royal Naval Reserve and the Royal Naval Auxiliary Service.

The Royal Navy has reviewed the continuing need for those tasks and concluded that the scale and immediacy of a perceived threat to the western alliance has reduced to such an extent that it is no longer sensible to earmark discrete forces for them. In the extreme circumstances of a rise in tension and a direct threat to this country, there will be sufficient time to provide such forces by an appropriate expansion, if necessary, of the Royal Naval Reserve or regeneration of the ex-regular reserves. The end of that requirement removes the need for 710 Royal Naval Reserve personnel and all but 135 of the Royal Naval Auxiliary Service ratings.

After careful study, we have concluded that there are no other roles that would be suitable for the RNXS and that such a service of 135 would be too small to be viable. Accordingly, and with considerable regret, we have concluded that the RNXS, which came into being only in 1962, should be disbanded and its training units closed. In making those proposals, I pay tribute to the loyalty and dedication of members of the RNXS over the years—this cannot be over-emphasised. However, I know that the RNXS would not wish to carry on with tasks that the tide of history has left behind. There will be an opportunity for up to 135 RNXS personnel with suitable skills in Naval Control of Shipping to join the Royal Naval Reserve to provide a capability for possible short-notice deployment overseas.

We have considered the impact on the reserves of developing technology. Nowhere is that more apparent than in the field of mine counter-measures. Our River class of minesweepers fleet, which provides the basis of the current Royal Naval Reserve seagoing role, was designed to counter deep-moored mines as well as a specific Soviet threat. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, that mine threat no longer exists. The minesweepers fleet has no other mine counter-measures capability and has been overtaken by advances in other aspects of mine counter-measure warfare and technology. Accordingly, we propose to withdraw those vessels from this role and the Royal Naval Reserve.

The task of deep-water mine counter-measures will be assumed by our modern mine counter-measure vessels such as the Sandown class. Such modern vessels are highly technical and require the crew to be at a high state of training readiness to be prepared to meet their operational commitments. It would not be possible fully to man the vessels with Royal Naval Reserves. However, under our new proposals, members of the Royal Naval Reserve will be able to serve on these vessels.

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): I follow the argument of my right hon. and learned Friend and accept the logic of what he says about the River class minesweepers. However, the next step in his chain of logic would be to confirm that there will be further orders for Sandown class minehunters. Does he accept that the need for mine counter-measure vessels has not diminished worldwide and, indeed, that the kind of threat facing us in the so-called new world order requires mine-hunting capacity? Will he confirm that the orders intended for later this year will be forthcoming?

Mr. Rifkind: I thank my hon. Friend for his understanding approach to the reasons that have led to this decision. We expect to go out to tender shortly in respect of the Sandown class minehunters. We intend to ensure that they will be available as soon as they are operationally necessary. I hope that that reassures him.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Both sides of the House will welcome the timely decision that the Secretary of State has just announced in response to changing world circumstances. Will he now tell us what change he will make to our nuclear capability in response to the changing world situation? Does it make any sense to continue as we are doing and not only retain our present nuclear weapons, but increase their size, numbers, range and power?

Mr. Rifkind: I am not sure that that is relevant to the role of the naval reserves, but, as the hon. Gentleman intervened to ask the question, I remind him that we have already announced the ending of all nuclear artillery, the use of Lance missiles and the use of tactical weapons on naval vessels.

Mr. Flynn: What about Trident?

Mr. Rifkind: We are committed to Trident and rightly so because it is based on our perception of what is the minimum deterrent required to ensure the protection of the United Kingdom. We have no intention of departing from that policy.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Rifkind: If I may, I shall return to dealing with the Royal Naval Reserve.

The Government fully accept that serving in Royal Navy ships lies at the heart of the Royal Naval Reserve, underpinning its ethos and recruiting. I am happy to announce that this role will be developed so that it encompasses all types of Royal Navy ship. We are proposing that a dedicated seagoing branch of some 500 personnel be set up, training in all types of Royal Navy ships, not just mine counter-measure vessels, and employed at sea wherever appropriate, as an integral part of the fleet. Additionally, smaller numbers of Royal Navy Reserves will assist in the logistics area, in submarine operations management and on aircraft maintenance. In future, Royal Naval Reserve training will be more closely sponsored by the appropriate Royal Navy organisation.

The net effect of these changing roles is that the Royal Naval Reserve will reduce from 4,700 to about 3,500. Eleven units will close, but a new unit, based in HMS Bristol, the harbour training ship at Portsmouth, would be created which would offer the opportunity for RNR personnel from HMS Sussex, HMS Wessex and HMS Southwick to transfer. In future, 13 RNR units, to be retitled "Reserve Centres", will be sited throughout the United Kingdom. We will try to find alternative employment in the Ministry of Defence or other Government Departments for some 200 civilian employees, some part-time, who will be affected, but this may not always be possible.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): I appreciate what my right hon. and learned Friend has said today. It is important for the Royal Naval Reserve to have an active role rather than one, of which I had experience, in the naval control of shipping. Can he say something about HMS President, which has been an important landmark in the City and a good recruiting and training centre? Will that unit be retained?

Mr. Rifkind: I thank my hon. Friend for his comments. The opportunity for members of the Royal Naval Reserve to train with the Royal Navy on all types of warship at sea is an important step forward and will be widely welcomed. I cannot give my hon. Friend an immediate answer to his question, but my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement, who will reply, will certainly respond to that point in due course.

I turn to our proposals for the Royal Auxiliary Air Force. Again, the end of the cold war and the manifestly reduced threat to the United Kingdom has a significant impact, particularly in relation to the direct threat to our airfields. Accordingly, we have concluded that it is no longer necessary to retain No. 1339 Wing, equipped with Oerlikon anti-aircraft guns and Skyguard radars to protect RAF Waddington and RAF Coningsby.

As hon. Members will know, our proposals under "Options for Change" will lead to the cessation of flying at RAF Honington. The Royal Air Force Regiment depot will move to that station from RAF Catterick. There is, therefore, no longer a requirement for the wartime specialist ground defence currently provided by No. 2623 (East Anglian) Squadron Royal Auxiliary Air Force Regiment. Notwithstanding the fine service that those units have given over the years, they no longer meet a defence need.

We have also reviewed our previous plans to expand the Royal Auxiliary Air Force defence force flights. Again, circumstances have changed so radically that it would be unwise to proceed with that expansion before the results of the service's wide-ranging review of its long-term requirements are known.

While those changes represent reductions in the auxiliary air force, I am delighted also to announce our proposals for the Royal Auxiliary Air Force to take on a new role, with auxiliaries filling about half the posts in two regular squadrons of the Rapier air-defence missile force. Recruiting is expected to begin next year in the areas around RAF Leuchars and RAF Leeming and the new units should be complete by 1997.

To simplify call-out procedures, which will require the introduction of the new legislation I mentioned earlier, we propose that that part of the Royal Air Force volunteer reserve which has a war role should be amalgamated with the Royal Auxiliary Air Force, producing a more streamlined organisation for war. That would not affect the Royal Air Force volunteer reserve training posts associated with the air cadet organisations and the university air squadrons.

Taken together, those proposals will lead to a net reduction of about 480 auxiliary air force posts. That is about 10 per cent. of the current strength of the RAF reserves.

The naval and air force proposals that I have announced will be of interest to a great number of hon. Members and to many people throughout the country. Accordingly, I have set out the proposals in some detail in consultative documents which I have placed in the Libraries of both Houses and which are also being sent to organisations known to have an interest. My hon. Friend the Minister for the Armed Forces and I have written to

those hon. Members whose constituencies are affected. Further copies of the documents are available in the Vote Office.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Bearing in mind the fact that this is the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the Royal Air Force, may I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to join me in congratulating Dowty Aerospace Propellers Ltd., for which many of my constituents work, on being selected to supply high technology and all composite propellers to the Lockheed Corporation? I understand that the Dowty propeller will equip the C130-J Hercules aircraft and that the order run may be about 500 aircraft sets, worth about £150 million. Does he agree that that is a great boost for British industry and shows that we are still a great engineering nation?

Mr. Rifkind: I am glad of this opportunity to congratulate Dowty on that success, which is a tribute to the excellence of our aerospace industry. As my hon. Friend will know, the Hercules C130-J is a candidate to replace our existing Hercules aircraft, which have given valuable service for over 25 years.

The proposals that I have announced today will be subject to consultation with the trade unions where civilian employment is affected. We shall continue to liaise closely with the territorial, auxiliary and volunteer reserve associations and the national employers liaison committee. The consultation period will run until 30 July. Thereafter, having considered any and all comments received, we will announce a decision on the proposals in due course.

We are living in a time of change, but I know that the Territorial Army as well as the naval and air force reserves will welcome our intent to use them more fully for operational roles in peacetime. This represents an historic change and is entirely appropriate to the new international situation.

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): I am interested to hear my right hon. and learned Friend's remarks about the reserves. He seems to be announcing reductions in the Royal Naval Reserve and the Royal Air Force Auxiliary as a positive step which will enable the people concerned to take part in more regular activities. I put it to him that by manning Rapier squadrons half with reservists, those squadrons are likely to be undermanned because, needless to say, in many cases the reservists will have full-time civilian jobs.

Mr. Rifkind: I assure my hon. Friend that it will be done in such a way as to ensure that the operational requirements of the Royal Air Force are fully met. It would be irresponsible to do otherwise. It is inevitable that there will be some reduction in the size of the Naval and Royal Air Force auxiliary services and reserves if certain of their basic roles are no longer required.

We have approached the matter from the point of view of whether there is a continuing need for a particular function. I do not think anyone would argue that, for example, naval control of shipping or the defence of ports and anchorages requires a dedicated force in the circumstances that we now face. That is the approach that we have adopted. Wherever we have identified new roles that make sense and are relevant to the needs of the Royal Air Force or the Royal Navy, we have been very willing to utilise those roles for such purposes.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Dealing specifically with the Royal Auxiliary Air Force and bearing in mind the increased role that Rapier squadrons are likely to have overseas as a result of the end of the cold war and the sort of peacekeeping operations that may have to be backed up by air defence or strike attack aircraft, may I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to say how those reservists will be able to go overseas with their squadrons in future to fulfil that role?

Mr. Rifkind: Reservists who are used overseas—this relates to my earlier remarks—will be volunteers. It will be for those who are willing, when they join the reserves, to be considered for such operational roles overseas to indicate that willingness and to be attached, I would expect, to units that may be used for that purpose. Then, should the circumstances so arise, they would be available. In broad terms, that is the way in which it will operate.

We have much work to do on that concept because this is the first time that we have considered using reserves, although many other countries do so. We shall be using the time in the coming months to prepare the necessary legislation and the pilot scheme that I said would be introduced in 1994, and translate this firm proposal into its specific procedural and other details, which will then take effect. I believe that it will be warmly welcomed.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): We have a clear lesson to learn from the Gulf war—clear at least to anybody who knows territorial soldiers, and I served with the TA for 13 years. Our former hon. Friend Neil Thorne, who represented Ilford, South, often raised the point in the House. It is that territorial soldiers should never be asked to volunteer twice. Calling for volunteers puts men, their employers and sometimes their families in an impossible position. Either a unit should be called out or it should not. Calling for volunteers places terrible stress on people. That is why the TA does not believe the document and is not happy with its content. It does not see it as a suitable way forward for using reservists in peacetime.

Mr. Rifkind: I would not dissent from some of the points that my hon. Friend makes, but he knows as well as I do that the TA has expressed a desire to be used in an operational role in peacetime. He knows it because he has urged that course on me on numerous occasions. What he and others who share that aspiration, which the Government endorse, can do is to help construct the precise structure which will enable that aspiration to be translated into practice. That is what we are seeking to do and I believe that it can be done effectively.

Mr. Archie Hamilton (Epsom and Ewell): Does my right hon. and learned Friend also accept that it is a complete travesty to say that all members of the TA are employed by large companies? That is not the position. They are often self-employed and sometimes they are unemployed. In those circumstances, they are grateful for the opportunity to serve. So it is nonsense to say that they will be withdrawn from their companies or that a disturbance will be created.

Mr. Rifkind: I accept that, and I am conscious of the fact that whenever I have visited TA units, the desire to be used in an operational role has been the single, most repeated request made to me. I suspect that hon. Members on both sides have often had that request put to them, for understandable reasons.

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): I fear that as more reserve forces are brought in as part of a wider scheme, people will feel that their jobs will be in jeopardy because of the view of their employers. Will the Government remove from the unemployment figures the unemployed who volunteer for the reserve forces?

Mr. Rifkind: That is among the sillier suggestions that I have heard for some time. The answer to the hon. Gentleman's underlying point is that we must have close liaison with the national employers liaison committee, which represents the interests of employers who have a commitment to assisting the reserves. We shall be working closely with that body.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): I represent what was the Chatham Royal Naval base and there is considerable local interest in the future of HMS Wildfire, the Royal Naval Reserve establishment in Chatham. Will my right hon. and learned Friend bear in mind the 500 years of naval history behind that unit? That is where naval affection is now focused and there will be sadness in the Medway towns if that link is broken.

Mr. Rifkind: I understand my hon. Friend's point. I hope that he will take the opportunity, however, to read the consultative document that we have published today. If he believes that particular points have not been properly considered, I hope that he will not hesitate to make them known to me.

I do not wish to detain the House for much longer——

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rifkind: Not at the moment, but no doubt there will be other opportunities to give way to the hon. Gentleman.

We are all conscious of the fact that the ending of the cold war and the collapse of communism in Europe was a triumph for NATO. I also believe that it was a triumph for the defence policies that had been pursued by the Government and previous Conservative Governments. I do not believe that the Opposition Front Bench Defence spokesmen can take any great sense of pride in what has been achieved with the collapse of communism and the end of the Warsaw pact.

On most of the major issues that we have had to address and concentrate our attention on in recent years, including the unilateral defence policy of the Labour party and the use of cruise missiles, the Labour party has opposed the fundamental tenor of Government defence policy.

Mr. Wareing: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Rifkind: In a moment.

Opposition Members claim to be men and women of principle, but that is not supported by the charge sheet. Once upon a time one used to ask, "What did you do during the great war?" The answer was, "I survived." If Opposition Members were asked what they did during the cold war, they should reply, "I surrendered", given the way in which, in successive election campaigns and in the House, they have committed themselves to policies designed to reduce defence expenditure and abandon our nuclear deterrent. The way in which they have generally ignored our defence interests has been appalling.

The hon. Members who now make up the Opposition defence team claim that they are now reformed characters and that their past convictions should not be held against them. It is important to remember exactly what they said in recent years, because all of them, who now have defence responsibilities, have quite a lot of answering to do.

The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) is responsible for defence matters in the shadow Cabinet, but even to this day none of us knows whether he is still a member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. He has never been prepared to confirm that he has left CND and his reluctance to do so makes us wonder whether he is still a member of it.

The record of the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on defence matters has not been much better. In 1982, during the Falklands war, he called for an immediate truce while the Argentinian forces still controlled the island. No doubt they would still control it if his advice had been accepted. In 1987, he called on the Government to cancel Trident in the light of international changing circumstances. We have never heard him confess that he was wrong to do so.

The hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) also supported the cancellation of Trident and yet now claims to support a Labour party policy that seeks to ensure Trident's continuation. We must ask ourselves what are the policies and principles on which those Front-Bench spokesmen seek to put forward their arguments.

The position of the shadow Cabinet is just as doubtful. The hon. Members for Livingston (Mr. Cook), for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) and for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett), three of its most prominent members, defied their leadership in 1990 by voting in favour of massive defence cuts to the level of the west European average.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Did the right hon. and learned Gentleman tell my hon. Friends that he intended to refer to them?

Mr. Rifkind: I am referring to the facts. *[Interruption.]* They are well aware——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. We cannot have repeated sedentary interventions.

Mr. Foulkes: It is a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Secretary of State has mentioned my hon. Friends and I would like to know whether he wrote to them to tell them what he intended to do. The three Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen on defence are here and are expected to be here, but has the right hon. and learned Gentleman had the courtesy to inform my other hon. Friends that he intended to mention them?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman knows the rules of the House as well as I do. He knows that I am referring to factual matters that are on the record and established and that, therefore, there is no need to follow that convention.

The reality is that three members of the shadow Cabinet have voted constantly for massive cuts in defence expenditure and sought to justify that. What about the deputy leader of the Labour party, the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett)? As recently as June last year she was asked in a Fabian pamphlet whether she supported the views of the Labour party conference, which called for a massive reduction of £6 billion in defence expenditure. She replied:

"I have always taken the view that conference determines Party policy."

If that is the view of the deputy leader of the Labour party, it needs to be questioned and we require a proper answer.

Mr. Wareing: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Rifkind: No, because I have a particular point to put to the hon. Member for South Shields, the Opposition's spokesman on defence.

During the 1992 general election campaign, the then Leader of the Opposition, the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), offered the most novel policy of the Labour party on defence. He said that the Opposition would not negotiate away Britain's nuclear weapons as long as other countries had such weapons. I hope that the hon. Member for South Shields will admit that the meaning of that statement was clear. The right hon. Member for Islwyn said:

"a Labour Britain will keep nuclear weapons as long as anyone else has them."

That appeared to be a clear, unambiguous statement. On 17 May this year, however, the hon. Member for South Shields, speaking on behalf of the Labour party, was asked to comment on matters involving Trident. He said:

"We would deploy and retain Trident, but if it got to the stage when we would consider it appropriate, we would enter Trident into the disarmament negotiations . . . we wouldn't give Trident away for nothing."

That is very reassuring, but not entirely satisfactory. Presumably we would give Trident away for something, if not for nothing—something short of the total removal of nuclear weapons by countries that represent a possible threat to us.

The hon. Member for South Shields owes it to the House and, perhaps, to his own party to tell us whether he has changed Labour party policy. We wish to know whether he stands by the views of the previous Leader of the Opposition, who said that we would keep our nuclear weapons

"as long as anyone else has them."

Is that or is it not still the policy of the Labour party?

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): I am delighted to clarify the situation. The position is quite clear and it was laid down in words of one syllable, or almost, so that Conservative Members had a chance to understand, in our manifesto. It clearly stated that Labour would

"in government partner the United States in negotiating to reduce"—

[Interruption.] I am reading slowly so that Conservative Members can understand—

"the world's stocks of nuclear weapons. We shall seek to involve the four former Soviet nuclear republics, together with France and China. Until elimination of those stocks is achieved, Labour will retain Britain's nuclear capability, with the number of warheads no greater than the present total."

I hope that that is clear to Conservative Members. That was the policy of the Labour party at the election and it is its policy today. That, too, is my policy, which I have reiterated time and time again. I hope that Conservative Members are able to understand words of one syllable.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman says that that is his policy, but it is not what he said in his major lecture at the International Institute for Strategic Studies on 17 May, when all that he was prepared to say was:

"we wouldn't give Trident away for nothing."

Dr. David Clark: That is the same thing.

Mr. Rifkind: I am interested in the hon. Gentleman's clarification, which the House is also delighted to hear. We are delighted that the hon. Gentleman has confirmed today that the Labour party would keep nuclear weapons as long as other countries kept theirs. That is a small step for mankind, but a great step for the Labour party.

Mr. Wareing: It is clear from the Secretary of State's speech that he wishes to defend British interests, although he uses small party political points to do so.

The Secretary of State mentioned the Falkland Islands. I recall that the withdrawal of a British ship from those islands gave a signal for the Argentinians to invade. When will the Secretary of State talk about Belize, where the withdrawal of British troops was foreshadowed exactly four days before by a coup d'état in Guatemala? That was four days after some Opposition Members had warned the right hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) that Guatemala was not stable and that Belize's safety was not safeguarded. Will the Secretary of State address himself to the protection of both British and Belizean interests in the Caribbean?

Mr. Rifkind: I had a valuable discussion with the Prime Minister of Belize only last week and we are conscious of our obligations to that country. The hon. Gentleman should know—if he does not, I am happy to inform him—that the new Government in Guatemala have not stated that they take a different view of the independence of Belize——

Mr. Wareing: Yet.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman says yet, as if there were an implicit threat. We have given the fullest protection to Belize and we are conscious of our responsibilities to that country. Belize is now recognised by and has diplomatic relations with Guatemala. Guatemala has withdrawn her claim to the territory and the idea that the United Kingdom should continue with a permanent military garrison in those circumstances is unrealistic. We have also said that, following the gradual withdrawal of the garrison, we shall continue to have a presence in Belize, as we intend to continue jungle training there.

The United Kingdom will continue to have the closest possible relations with Belize and with its Government. If the hon. Gentleman suggests that a permanent garrison is required, he must appreciate that that would be a most inappropriate policy to pursue.

Mr. Wareing: No agreement with former Guatemalan President Serrano Elias had been reached on territorial waters even before the coup. Who knows what could be in store in an unstable country where there was a great threat of a military takeover just a few weeks ago? Is the Secretary of State saying that he is certain that that threat has gone for ever?

Mr. Rifkind: The question is whether we choose to retain a military garrison in an independent state that has, at the moment, no claims upon its territory from other countries. We do not keep military garrisons around the world. We keep them in territories where we have an historic obligation or where there is a threat to a country's independence and integrity. The idea that, because of unresolved differences of view between two countries that do not involve the independence or integrity of either state,

[Mr. Rifkind]

we should keep a military garrison on an open-ended basis is a grave distortion of priorities for any country, and particularly for this country at the present time.

I emphasise that we have no intention of abandoning Belize. The withdrawal of our garrison will be gradual and could be reversed if circumstances justified it. We have no reason to believe that the present Guatemalan Government have any intention of reopening some of the old animosities. If that intention were to change, we would have to take that carefully into account.

I shall conclude by saying—*[Interruption.]* I am conscious that I have been speaking for quite a long time. A number of hon. Members wish to speak and I hope I may be allowed to conclude.

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman has tabled an amendment and he will wish to speak to it. If he catches the Chair's eye, he may be able to put forward his views.

The Government are conscious that there are difficult challenges and problems for the armed forces of the United Kingdom to face. That is inevitable at a time when we are experiencing a reduction in the size of the armed forces. It is not a problem unique to the United Kingdom —clearly all NATO countries face similar circumstances. Dramatic changes are occurring in the former Warsaw pact countries which require considerable attention and cause severe strains.

There is no doubt that, at the end of that process, we will still be able to say without equivocation that the United Kingdom retains one of the most powerful, relevant and significant military forces both in Europe and in the international community. Our professional armed forces are held in the highest respect because of their professionalism, expertise and training. We remain committed to those standards and, while there will inevitably be difficulties over the next couple of years, I believe that we will come through that period and that our armed forces will continue to be a source of great pride and achievement to the British people.

5.6 pm

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): I shall begin in a non-controversial manner by joining the Minister in wishing good will to our troops in Bosnia and in many other trouble spots of the world. I wish them well and hope that they come back to this country safely.

I wish to place the Labour party's gratitude to our service personnel on the record. They have demonstrated their dedication and professionalism on numerous occasions over the past year. We should recognise that, and also that we are extremely fortunate to have those high quality armed forces. The demand by such bodies as the UN for British forces testifies to their excellence and skill. We are fortunate to have them.

We are also fortunate to have the reserves, who give the country more time and effort than is reflected by the remuneration that they receive. We must remember also the thousands of Ministry of Defence civilian workers and the hundreds of thousands of defence workers who play a vital part in the defence of our country.

The Secretary of State announced far-reaching proposals for the reserves. We must study those proposals with care. I noticed that he did not get the resounding support that I think he had expected from his Back Benchers. We must study the small print of the proposals.

The Secretary of State announced the proposals in a positive way, but left many questions unanswered. Many of us feel that the decision is not strategic, nor is it based on defence requirements. It is based on a decision by the Treasury to screw money out of the Ministry of Defence. When he replies to the debate, I would like the Minister to state how much the proposal will save, or how much extra money it will cost. Will he also say whether there will be any further reductions in the size of the Territorial Army? Those questions must be examined carefully.

The Secretary of State's announcement, and the way in which it was announced, gave a new meaning to the "army of unemployed" in this country. The Secretary of State was dismissive of the problem of unemployed reservists. However, there are 3 million people out of work and a number of them are reservists. He pooh-poohed questions about whether those reservists will be available for work. I hope that he will address that question. The petty interpretation currently employed by the Government for people who are trying to do voluntary work does not bode well for the future.

The Labour party has called for this debate for the past nine months and, obviously, we now welcome it very much. We are conscious that we are discussing the defence White Paper for 1992 halfway through 1993. It is clear that none of the discussions or votes relating to the debate will have any impact on the defence estimates, which have already been passed by the House with our support. We are debating the Government's statements on the estimates—in other words, the Government's defence strategy. We understand why the Government have been so slow to hold a debate. It is ironic that we are debating these estimates now, when within two weeks we shall get the defence estimates for 1993. I hope that in future the Government will not treat the House in such a cavalier manner.

On examining the Government's statement on defence, I can say only that by their neglect and incompetence and through their sheer inefficiency the Government have mismanaged gravely the defence of our nation.

The reason why they have made such a mess is quite clear. They are simply unable to shake off their free-market dogma and come to terms with the demise of the Soviet Union. The Conservatives have never been adept at handling change. As one Tory wag once remarked, it is not that they are against change; they simply do not like doing anything for the first time. That is the Government's dilemma. The concept of planning is anathema to them, yet planning is absolutely central to defence. Thus, with the greatest changes in the security sphere since the end of world war two, they rejected a full-scale defence review in which the chiefs of staff were properly consulted. That has been the traditional method of reassessing our defence strategy and that is what should have been done on the breakdown of the cold war.

In a letter to the *RUSI News Sheet* of autumn 1991, Richard Mottram, a senior MOD civil servant, stated that the group that produced the first "Options for Change" proposals, while it did contain some military personnel, did not include the chiefs of staff. The most important reason for this was to

"help avoid . . . selective leaks to the media".

That is why chiefs of staff were excluded from the discussions on "Options for Change".

I find it disturbing that Government Ministers had such little confidence in their chiefs of staff that they actually agreed with that. What confidence can the House have in a defence policy that has been written without proper consultation with the military?

Mr. Mans: While I can understand that there was a compelling reason to have a full-scale defence review at the end of the cold war, does the hon. Gentleman not agree that, with hindsight, that would not have been the right way forward? Events have moved so rapidly and in such unpredictable ways that any review at that time would already be out of date. With hindsight, was not Government policy at the time—to look at the situation and make the changes they did—the right one?

Dr. Clark: I can answer the hon. Gentleman in one word—no. The real reason is that the Tory party is dogged with dogma. Any defence review was out of the question, so the then Secretary of State decided to have his hole-in-the-corner review of defence which he grandly called, "Options for Change".

The irony is that in the past couple of weeks we have had the best explanation and description of that process in the diaries produced by the then Minister of State, Alan Clark. It is quite remarkable that he spills the beans and tells us what it was all about. He was very quick off the mark and presented his own proposals on 14 January which, in his own words, were "the lead document" and had the advantage that they were "only five pages long" as opposed to the cumbersome policies and documents put forward by the other parties. He describes in great detail what happened.

"How shrewd and good I was to get it in first",

he writes, and talks about how he was beginning to win the battle in the Ministry of Defence. He says:

"I retoy with the idea of supplanting him,"

—the then Secretary of State—

"and promptly. Of course I should be in charge",

he writes,

"handling the whole thing at international level, also Washington, Brussels. My present solution would be to move TK to Health".

I shall not continue because he is rather rude about certain Conservative Members. He goes on to describe the critical ministerial meeting with the Prime Minister in the chair. He says:

"I set out my stall, named and costed a number of programmes which could be eliminated without any risk. This induced show intakes of breath from the military men but I could see Lawson and Lamont beaming with approval. Martin Farndale tried to come back at me, but the PM cut him off and she started on a quite well-informed (Charles's hand clearly in evidence) summary of the approach to the equipment problems, and the need for 'inter-operability' across NATO. When the Prime Minister said that 'further work was needed' I jumped in. It was now or never."

Mr. Cormack: It is a book at bedtime.

Dr. Clark: That is exactly the point. It does read like a book at bedtime. However, it is how the Government did their defence review. I thank the hon. Gentleman for making the point for me.

The book continues:

"What a coup! . . . 'Well done Alan', said Lawson . . . We've made it! Single-handed, you and I are going to write the Review."

Those were the words of a player in the "Options for Change" review. It was really like Noddy land. As the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) said, it was just like a book at bedtime. I suggest to the House that it was not a proper or sensible way to devise our country's defence.

Mr. Robathan: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the amusing interlude that he is giving us. Does he view Alan Clark as a reliable source of information? If he does, he has further proved that the Labour party is not fit to determine our defence. Surely Alan Clark can never be called a reliable source of information.

Dr. Clark: All I can say is that, to the best of my knowledge, Alan Clark is not a member of the Labour party; he is a card-carrying member of the Conservative party. He was a Minister of the Crown until he himself resigned; he was not actually sacked and, as he has produced the only account of "Options for Change", we must accept it as the true one until the Government describe precisely what happened.

Mr. David Young: Is it not a sad concern that the Government have not created a comprehensive review in order to meet the current situation which is resulting now in the loss of morale in the forces, the fact that forces are over-stressed and over-worked and the fact that Britain is not in a position to meet the day-to-day commitments that are forced on us by the United Nations and by the rise of nationalism? Are not the Tories avoiding their election commitment to provide the necessary resources for the effective defence of this country because they have never planned for such a defence?

Dr. Clark: My hon. Friend put the point so well that I might consider employing him as my speech writer. He is quite right that there is no strategy and that is why we are in the current mess.

After the bedtime stories, the then Secretary of State, who quite clearly came from the same military school as Blackadder, decided to produce one of Baldrick's cunning plans and, like all Baldrick's cunning plans, it has fallen apart.

Then there was the indignity of Ministers sneaking out figures just before the Easter break, so that the House could not discuss them, announcing that 5,000 extra personnel in the Royal Navy were to be sacked. That sort of action comes from having no strategic plan. There is not even a document "Options for Change"; only a parliamentary statement supplemented by newspaper leaks and Government announcements, which, perhaps, makes the point that there has been no strategic thinking.

As has been said, the great asset of the plan was supposed to be flexibility. But, critically, that means that there was no strategic assessment of our defence needs in the mid-1990s and beyond. There has been no attempt to match the shape of our forces to the threats and risks facing our security and our obligations to the world community. What we needed then, as now, was a full-scale defence review.

We all accept that we live in a changed world and that there will be reductions in defence spending. On 19 May, the Minister of State for Defence Procurement told the House that Britain would be making cuts of about 10 per cent. in the next three years. That adds up to a reduction of about 30 per cent. by the end of the decade.

[Dr. Clark]

No one quibbles with the need for reduced defence expenditure. However, when expenditure is cut it is all the more important to get it right. The correct balance must be struck between our services and those of our NATO allies. Because the Government failed to have a fundamental review, we have seen repeated examples of crisis management and the associated over-stretch. Our armed forces have too many roles to undertake.

The Government cannot take decisions themselves. In the autumn of 1992, the Government told the people of Plymouth, in the local press, that they would announce before Christmas 1992 whether Devonport or Rosyth would refit Trident. Yet, here we are in June, still awaiting that decision. When will they make up their minds? When will they end the uncertainty? When will they put the people out of their misery? Or do they enjoy torturing people? It appears that the well-known inability of the Prime Minister to take decisions has infected the Secretary of State with a vengeance.

It is not only the lack of decision or strategy towards change that concerns us; it is the mistaken policies based on pure dogma, especially those of privatisation and contractorisation. That approach has cost this country dear. For example, there was the recent fiasco at St. Athans with the Tornado fighters, so ably highlighted by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan). The House will recall that, under the Government's competitive tendering scheme, a £7 million contract was awarded to Airwork Services to refit the fighters. It is understood that the company so botched up the work and cut so many corners that the planes are now unfit for service. The cost of rectifying that will be about £6 million per plane—on a £7 million contract. Meanwhile, 18 crucial fighter planes are grounded.

I put it to the Secretary of State that if he had achieved the downing of 18 fighters single-handed in the last war he would have been awarded the iron cross personally by Goering. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has achieved the almost impossible, all because of dogma. That is not an isolated case. Tragically, there have been as many cases as there have been escapees under Group 4 —another example of the Government's dogmatic approach.

On 9 June 1993, the National Audit Office confirmed that the Minstry of Defence police are investigating a massive fraud involving shipowners and agents during the Gulf war crisis; an issue that we raised in 1991, for which we were ridiculed. While our troops were risking their lives trying to liberate Kuwait, the fat cats were busy milking the inefficiencies of the MOD. Excessive commissions were paid, nearly all the charters were placed with foreign shipowners because the Government had destroyed the Merchant Navy and vast profits were made. It is small wonder that the Tory party received £7 million in their coffers from foreign business men, who have been richly rewarded.

There is not only fraud but inefficiency. The same National Audit Office revealed that almost £50 million out of £260 million was spent unnecessarily because of Government incompetence. The country paid the price then for Tory dogma, but that was not an isolated case. Only yesterday the Public Accounts Committee was severely critical of the Government over ship refitting contracts. It revealed that £224 million—these are vast sums—was wasted on refitting two nuclear submarines which were then decommissioned in the middle of the refit. What a disaster, what a tragedy and what a costly mistake for which the British taxpayer is having to foot the bill.

The tragedy is that the Government do not seem to have learnt the lesson. The National Audit Office, in its report, says that the chartering arrangements to the former Yugoslavia are so poor that

"the absence of suitable movements systems and expertise . . . could then have serious consequences"

for the supplies going to our troops. I shall not spell out the implications of those findings, but the Secretary of State must drop that dogmatic approach to all things and sort out the system once and for all because lives are literally at stake.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): Before my hon. Friend moves on from that shameful catalogue of inefficiency by the Secretary of State and his predecessor, will he add to it the case of HMS Victoria which has cost the taxpayer an additional £70 million, is three years behind in delivery and still does not have the defence systems that were intended for it? Will my hon. Friend press the Secretary of State to ensure that before the debate is concluded on Monday evening we have a full and frank disclosure of the circumstances behind the scandalous loss of public money in relation to HMS Victoria, know when the vessel will be completed and have a reassurance that it will have the defence systems for which it was originally designed?

Dr. Clark: I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for the assiduous way in which he has gone about researching and publicising that scandal. Representing a constituency on the River Tyne—perhaps I should say River Teign, which seems to be the Prime Minister's way of describing it—I well remember the problem. It is a sore point. When I, along with my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon), have 800 constituents likely to be made redundant by Swan Hunter, it is particularly painful to realise that that order was deliberately turned away from the Tyne and given to Belfast. Therefore, I look forward to the reply to my hon. Friend's question and I hope that the Minister will be forthcoming.

Will the Secretary of State, or the Minister when he replies, confirm that last Friday, as questions were being asked in the House about the future of our troops in Bosnia and whether they should or could be evacuated, the Royal Fleet Auxiliary Argos, whose light artillery, the Secretary of State told us when the naval task force was sent to the Adriatic, was critical in aiding the evacuation of our troops, was, almost to the minute, sailing into a military port in the south of England loaded with the very light artillery that the Minister told us was vital if we were to get our troops safely out of Bosnia? That is a serious charge and the Minister owes an explanation not only to the House and the country but to the troops in Bosnia who were told that equipment was available to help. Why was the RFA Argos brought home at that critical time?

The Minister may refer to Sea Harriers, but they cannot provide 24-hour cover. They are dependent on ground guidance, and are unable to reach troops in the split second that is sometimes required. If light artillery were in place, it could provide the cover needed. I hope that the Minister will remedy that serious inadequacy as speedily as possible.

The Government threaten our defence with their incompetence, indecision and inefficiency—but also by their negative approach. Nowhere is that more clearly seen than in the comprehensive test ban treaty. The United States, Russia and France all agreed to a moratorium on nuclear testing. Only Britain and China disagreed. It is widely understood that the British Government's position is the hardest of them all, and that threatens the complementary non-proliferation treaty, which is due for review in 1995.

It is widely acknowledged that, unless there is progress with a comprehensive test ban treaty, the future of the non-proliferation treaty will be at stake. Why are the Government so obstinate? There is no need for further testing.

In a letter to *The Independent* on 18 February, four former ambassadors and senior civil servants clearly and explicitly made the case against nuclear testing. Many leading scientists in this country and overseas—including Lord Zuckerman, the former MOD chief scientist—take a similar view. The Government know the situation. In a letter to me dated 14 June, the Secretary of State wrote:

"At the first meeting of the NPT preparatory committee held last month, some countries made it clear that in deciding their own approach toward the non-proliferation treaty they felt it important to see progress being made towards a CTBT."

The Secretary of State cannot claim that he does not understand the argument. Why does he not act upon it? It is in the interests of Britain and of the whole world that the non-proliferation treaty is signed. Security is a far wider concept than defence. In a world of weapons of mass destruction, security is probably more vital than the narrow concept of defence.

A lack of leadership seems to characterise the Government, who constantly trail behind and are never in the vanguard. That is clear in the case of Bosnia in particular and of the United Nations in general. The Government have always lagged behind what is required in Bosnia, and people have lost their lives because of it.

The Labour party shares the Government's caution, but we have always argued and advocated a policy aimed at protecting non-combatants. Fortunately, we have been able to drag the Government along, but always slowly—and lives were lost in the meantime. If only the Government had acted earlier and with vigour, the consequences would have been much better.

As early as 7 August 1992 I called—on behalf of the Labour party—for United Kingdom troops to be sent to Bosnia to escort humanitarian convoys as part of the United Nations effort, but we had to wait until 22 September before the Government decided to act. Why the delay? In December, the shadow Cabinet responded to my suggestion that the United Kingdom should advocate and support in the United Nations a no-fly zone over Bosnia. We had to wait until 1 April before Government support for such a policy was forthcoming.

When the House last debated Bosnia, on 29 April, I argued that United Nations safe havens should be protected by United Nations troops, and that if asked, Britain should consider allowing our troops to participate in that humanitarian role. We still await the Government's conversion. The six-nation declaration of 24 May that only United Nations troops will receive protection in safe havens almost beggars belief. Are not British troops there to protect non-combatants? They must be. That is their purpose.

Our defence industries play an integral part in our country's defence effort. We acknowledge that with defence spending cutbacks both here and abroad, there will inevitably be reductions in the numbers employed in those industries. We differ from the Government in that we feel that one simply cannot disregard the years of loyal service given by those employees. It is not sufficient to let the free market decide their fate and to throw them on the dole with the 3 million other unemployed.

In the past three years, the national press has logged 81,900 workers in defence-related industries as losing their jobs. That figure excludes thousands more job losses that have not been reported at a national level. Do the Government feel no obligation to those people? Why do they reject calls from this side of the House to assist those workers by establishing a defence diversification agency? The Governments of other countries assist their companies to develop into other markets and products. The dual use of technology may be difficult but it is not impossible. Other countries and other companies are achieving that. In Britain, many local authorities are endeavouring to assist in that way, so why do the Government shirk their responsibility?

This Government, in the words of the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, are more interested in office than power. They are a Government without vision. They are a Government devoid of a leadership instinct. They are a Government for whom ideas seem too much of a burden. That is characteristic of all the Government's activities, but nowhere is it more clearly seen than in the sphere of defence. As a result, the very security of Britain is suffering.

5.36 pm

Sir Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) attacked my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence for dogma, but I could hear in the hon. Gentleman's words echoes again of the Labour party's anti-nuclear stance. The strength of our nuclear arm was surely one factor in the collapse of the Warsaw pact. We stuck with it through thick and thin, despite criticisms, and with difficulty and expense—but I believe that that was the most sensible, worthwhile, and peace-promoting activity that the Government undertook in conjunction with their allies.

I want today to draw attention to our reserves. This afternoon, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State made some important announcements. The world scene does not give me any feeling of great peace or security. I have not added up the figures, but the other day I was told that there are no fewer than 28 armed conflicts currently raging in the world.

I do not see any great reduction in the threat from the former Warsaw pact. Many of those soldiers have nothing to do and are hungry, and many of the factories are still producing armaments in substantial quantities. Furthermore, the Governments that are supposed to have control of those countries—although they may or may not have control—are themselves insecure and unstable, and those countries are on our borders. Elsewhere in the world, the scene is no happier.

[Sir Jerry Wiggin]

I did not cast my vote in support of "Options for Change", because I believed that it was premature and too much. It must be sensible at a time when we are reducing our regular forces to enhance our reserves. There cannot be a strategist in history who would not acknowledge that as a sensible way to proceed. In fact, regular officers in command of our armed services, who are responsible for deploying their resources with the maximum effect and maximum economy, in their opinion, will always derate the reservist and say, "I would rather have a regular frigate than 10 minesweepers," or, "I would rather have a regular company than 10 Territorial Army battalions." I am afraid that that philosophy has been allowed to prevail again. I understand that the Territorial Army is undergoing yet further inspection, months after "Options for Change".

More than 10 years ago, when I was at the Ministry of Defence, I had the welcome and happy task of helping to expand the Territorial Army. We set targets that I considered somewhat optimistic on the whole; indeed, they were never achieved. For a number of reasons that I have given the House before, recruitment was never maintained at the desired level.

When the "Options for Change" figures were published, I had to say that I thought it realistic to set a reasonable and sensible figure, in terms of recruitment and equipment. Now all that has been overturned, and a further examination of possible economies in the TA is being made. Rumour has it that up to 14 units may be involved.

Perhaps I should declare an interest—not a financial one. I have the honour to have been appointed honorary colonel of A squadron of the Royal Mercian and Lancastrian Yeomanry, an amalgamation which—although, thanks to the common sense of the officers, it is proceeding happily—is far from natural.

The other day, I heard an ugly rumour that the MOD was thinking of abolishing honorary colonels; I sincerely hope that it was but a rumour. Although I well understand that the political power that such a collection of gentlemen can produce is sometimes uncomfortable for those sitting in Whitehall, I believe that they have a role to play, and that their abolition would be outrageous. In any case, I have not yet paid for my mess kit.

I think I heard my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State say that he had no plans to reorganise the Territorial Army associations. They, too, play a political role of a sort: they not only maintain TA buildings, but maintain the liaison between employers, serving TA soldiers and the community in every area. I hope that the Territorial Army volunteer reserve associations can be preserved in their present form.

My right hon. and learned Friend spoke of consultation. I note that each of the documents published this afternoon, concerning RAF and Royal Navy reserves, has "Consultative Documents" in large letters on the front page. To me, however, that has the ring of something produced by the MOD. However many consultations may be proposed, there seems little likelihood of change.

If my right hon. and learned Friend genuinely intends consultation to take place, I hope that he will study carefully the paper that has just been produced by the council of TAVRAs; it has been sent to some of us in the past few days. The document, which is extremely well written, calmly argues the fundamental point that a reservist, if trained to carry his personal weapon, to conduct himself in a military manner and to understand the chain of command—in other words, to look after himself—can be useful in any circumstances.

The same applies to the seaman. The mine counter-measures training of the Royal Naval Reserve may not be so relevant to today's threat, but the fact remains that—for very little pay, and with very little reward—reservists were able to operate and navigate their ships, to look after themselves and to behave in a seamanlike way. They, too, would have been of asssistance.

I do not think that my right hon. and learned Friend can get away with hoping that he will not be criticised for his announcements about the RNR. The removal of no fewer than nine ships and 11 units, as announced in the document, deals a death blow to the RNR. It is ridiculous to suggest that re-enlisting 500 men in aircraft and submarine maintenance will produce anything like the present-day RNR. The truth is that the regular view has prevailed: "We will keep our regular frigates, and to hell with the reservists." It is a very sad day for the RNR; I deeply deplore what has happened, and I hope that what I have said will be counted as my contribution to the consultation.

I know that, in the next few months, Ministers' minds will be engaged by the question of the size and role of all the reserves. I emphasise the word "role". The regulars' favourite trick is to argue that there must be a role. Everything must be cut and dried: we must know exactly what this or that soldier will do when we go to war. One of the lessons of history is that almost never does a war obligingly come up to suit the staff college; wars are always unexpected and happen in the wrong place, the equipment is wrong and the soldiers have been trained in the wrong way. What, then, is wrong with training a reserve force? It must be sensible.

I believe that, last year, the reserve force cost the MOD 2·08 per cent. of its total expenditure. The Ministry cannot have anything cheaper than that. My regiment has 20-year-old vehicles. The standard of training is extremely high, and there is a good deal of enthusiasm; the pay, however, is minimal. If it were not for the enthusiastic way in which the soldiers are led, the MOD would be getting nothing for its money, but in fact it receives extraordinary good value. I hope that, one day, one of the Ministers will spare the time to visit us so that we can show him at first hand the excellent job that TA soldiers are doing.

I was interested to note that the hon. Member for South Shields mentioned the decision on the nuclear refit at Devonport. Although my constituency is about 100 miles from Devonport, the entire west country considers that decision crucial. There is no longer a justification for two dockyards the size of Rosyth and Devonport; at some point, hard decisions will have to be made. The sooner it is decided that Devonport shall be the principal dockyard for the south coast, the better: ultimately, that is what will happen, and if we go on dithering we shall simply waste a good deal of money and cause a good deal of ill feeling.

The west country is also affected by the question of the EH101. I have often argued in the House for the provision of proper helicopter support for the British forces. As long as the RAF is responsible for supporting the Army, problems involving the allocation of money will arise—

problems identical to those caused by the conflict between regulars and reserves. In 1987, Lord Younger—then Secretary of State for Defence—promised that the EH101 would be purchased in its utility version to provide medium heavy lift capacity for the British armed forces; nothing has been heard since.

We know that, because the so-called Air Mobile Brigade is about as mobile as the bicycle corps used to be because it has no helicopters, pressure is now building up. Experience of the Gulf and other such theatres—along with the experience of other armies, and the work of analysts—has shown that the British forces need a substantial helicopter enhancement.

The RAF was bemused by the offer of a cheap version of the Chinook, whose design is more than 30 years old. Of course it will pay the Americans to sell the British forces a cheap version of the helicopter: it will put our helicopter producers out of business, and in 10 or 15 years, when it comes to the next round, there will be no British alternative. The EH101 is technically an advanced helicopter, well capable of beating all its rivals. I accept that it is on the expensive side, but, if the RAF does not buy it, what hope have we of selling it anywhere else?

My hon. Friend the Minister may not be aware that the MOD made our aircraft industry a laughing stock in the recent Paris air show by revealing that MOD officials had inquired of the French Ministry whether it had any secondhand Pumas for sale. What on earth are we doing when something such as that happens? The EH101 is a fine aircraft and we want a firm order—we have 40 in mind. Let us go ahead and show the world what we mean. That will be good for United Kingdom Ltd., because we will sell that helicopter around the world.

Mr. Mans: Does my hon. Friend agree that, although the initial purchase of the EH101 may appear to be expensive, if one compares the full life costs of that aircraft with that of the Chinook, it works out considerably cheaper?

Sir Jerry Wiggin: Yes, and it is not only that. The reliability that will be built in—such as the non-vibration factors and so on—will commend that helicopter enormously.

The hon. Member for South Shields was complaining about decisions that had been delayed for months. This decision has been delayed for years, and it is time it was made in favour of the EH101.

5.50 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): It is difficult to escape a sense that some of our deliberations this afternoon may be inconclusive because of the imminence of the publication of the estimates for 1993. For example, looking back at the Defence Committee's response to the 1992 estimates, it is clear that the Committee's observations about the submarine fleet are likely to be overtaken by events. The Government's proposals are likely to be available in a more detailed form in the 1993 estimates than in those for 1992.

In spite of that, a debate of this sort necessarily allows an opportunity for the discussion of a number of long-term issues. It was notable that the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark)—he is no longer in the Chamber, because he has another obligation—began by asking for a full-scale defence review. There is never a defence review now that is not accompanied by the adjectives "full" and "scale".

A call for such a review was repeated this morning in the Scottish newspapers by Lieutenant-General Sir Peter Graham, the recently retired GOC Scotland. He has gone from that eminent position to lead the campaign to save the Gordon Highlanders. That may to some extent justify the view that, if there were to be a full-scale defence review, at least in the beginning, Mr. Alan Clark was sensible to consider that involving the service chiefs might not be wise.

The hon. Member for South Shields considered that the fact that it was thought that they might be the source of leaks was some sort of reflection on them. I should have thought that it was almost inevitable, in circumstances such as those outlined in the "Diaries", that leaks would have occurred, because there would necessarily be some inter-service rivalry. The hon. Member for South Shields was being, if not naive, perhaps a little disingenuous.

There is no doubt that Mr. Alan Clark believed that he was the progenitor of something in the nature of a review. However, it was clear when "Options for Change" was first announced in the House and spoken to by the then Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King), that he believed that a defence review was not under way.

Tribute was paid earlier in the debate to the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton). I should like to add my congratulations to him on his tenure of office and to thank him for the courtesy that he displayed to me, particularly during the Gulf war. He was at pains on a number of occasions to ensure that I was aware of certain steps that were being taken by the Government so that the fullest information, consistent with security, was available to hon. Members of all parties.

The right hon. Gentleman conducted himself then and on many other occasions with a great deal of charm and courtesy for which I am grateful. I hope that we will hear from him frequently in debates of this sort, because he knows where the bodies are buried. He may be able to bring a perception to some of our debates that we would otherwise lack. If he is ever looking for battle honours, he may be able to claim, with some justification, that he served for a number of years in the Ministry of Defence with Mr. Alan Clark.

My criticisms of "Options for Change" are that there were never any options, there were never any choices and there was never any public discussion of the commitments, or the resources that might be made available to meet those commitments. I must say, particularly to those on the Opposition Front Bench—I do not excuse myself from this criticism—that it is far too easy to use the notion of a defence review as a shield against taking tough decisions.

There is no doubt that any Government of any political colour operating on the Treasury Bench now would face a series of critical and extremely difficult decisions because of the change in the strategic environment and reduced resources. It is important to realise that a defence review is not a solution. It is a means of identifying questions that will require solutions. I believe that a review is a better means of identifying those questions than any other, but it is important that one does not respond to every change in the defence environment by pretending to people in Harrogate, Rosyth and Devonport that, if there were to be

[Mr. Menzies Campbell]

a full-scale review, the difficult decisions involving their futures would be taken in a way entirely favourable to them.

Those of us who argue for a defence review have an obligation to make it clear that a review will be a more effective way of identifying the decisions, but that in the end, against the background of changes in the strategic environment and reduced resources, difficult decisions will have to be taken.

Another criticism of "Options for Change" is this. There have been substantial changes in the international security environment since July 1990. It would be surprising should there not be a change of policy to meet those changes. What policy decisions by any Department in July 1990, other than the Ministry of Defence, are still standing unaltered? The changes in the international security environment that I have in mind include Yugoslavia, the break-up of the Soviet Union, instability in the middle east and the extended role of the United Nations.

I do not believe that a middle-ranking power such as the United Kingdom can now maintain every capability, but I believe that an alliance can. Therefore, the significance of NATO and, in due course, the evolution of a common foreign and security policy within the European Community, is the means by which we may be able to provide the necessary range of capabilities. It was an alliance that met the Soviet threat. Alliances are now necessary to ensure access to the range of capabilities that the changing international situation may well require.

We must acknowledge that the driving force of a European security policy is financial as much as political, as is the reduction of United States forces in Europe. It was commonly believed that "Options for Change" was Treasury-driven, although that has been consistently denied by the Government. However, if, as is popularly believed, something such as "Options II" is taking place, with the purpose of taking £4 billion over the next three years out of the Ministry of Defence budget, that can only be at the imperative of the Treasury, and cannot be the product of a strategic overview or some rational analysis of commitments.

Some weeks ago, Sir Richard Vincent, formerly senior commander in the United Kingdom and now a senior commander with NATO, exhorted the polititians to state what the clear political objectives might be in Yugoslavia before consideration of any commitment to further military resources. He was stating a truism but, like many truisms, it frequently has to be repeated. The same applies in defence policy.

We must have clear political objectives before we can determine what resources are necessary, but we must acknowledge that we do not start with a blank sheet of paper. Previous decisions of previous Governments have an influence over what we may do now, as do political commitments and historical responsibilities. There will always be a temptation to operate at the margin—to delay a particular procurement programme, or to make reductions in personnel, aircrafts or ships at the margin —because that is the easiest way to manage a reduction in defence spending. It is much easier to do it that way than to make difficult choices between, for example, size and quality. In the changing environment, I believe it will become more important for us to consider how we do something rather than how many things we do.

We must explore the question of force specialisation. I do not underestimate the difficulties of embarking on such a project. There would be opposition from the services and the defence industry and there would be political consequences within existing alliances, all of which would be mirrored in countries with which we sought to have a dialogue about force specialisation. It will, however, be essential to move in that direction because the financial compulsion will be overwhelming.

It would be too simplistic, especially in the light of the two opening speeches, to call for a consensus in the House, but we shall need some kind of general domestic political understanding of the direction in which policy is taking us because some of the decisions made will be irreversible. I cite an example which, as it did not happen in this way, might be thought to be neutral. If the Government had cancelled the European fighter aircraft, as they were under some pressure to do, the project would not have been reinstated. It is, therefore, very important that there should be a general domestic understanding of where policies are leading and what the consequences of certain decisions might be, perhaps not today or next year but in five or 10 years.

One matter in which consensus would be highly desirable is that of nuclear deterrence. I have never had any difficulty with the independent nuclear deterrent. I believe that for the foreseeable future it will be necessary for the United Kingdom to maintain it. I also believe, and have often said, that we need four submarines for that deterrent to be constantly available. However, I can see no justification for the deployment of any more warheads on Trident than on the Polaris system which it is to replace. Trident has twice the range, is much more accurate and is capable of being independently targeted.

I am not saying anything that the Minister has not heard me say before if I state that there is no justification for the tactical air-to-surface missile. We may just have persuaded the Government about that, but it is at least still a live issue. The TASM is the product of the old thinking which NATO has abandoned, the product of the doctrine of flexible response, nuclear war fighting, an effort to find a weapon that could cope with the massed tank formations of the Warsaw pact countries as they streamed across the inner German border.

Mr. Brazier: I am following the hon. and learned Gentleman's argument carefully. On that narrow point, what type of deterrent does he think we could provide to a third world dictator—many, some as near as Libya and Algeria, are close to possessing nuclear weapons—without TASM, because Trident would be very difficult to use in a third world scenario?

Mr. Campbell: I must take issue with the hon. Gentleman from a technical point of view. The evidence given to the Select Committee on that topic was that Trident is capable of being used in a sub-strategic role—one missile with one warhead. I do not believe that it is a realistic threat, and I shall tell the hon. Gentleman why in a moment, but if he is anxious to maintain a capability against the threat that he outlines, he could have it with the Trident system. In what circumstances does the hon. Gentleman conceive that the United Kingdom, acting

alone without its allies, would consider the independent use of a sub-strategic weapon? I find it difficult to imagine such circumstances. Let me put the question in a slightly different way to reveal the nature of my thinking.

What additional increment of deterrence does the United Kingdom need beyond what is already available within the alliances of which we are a member and which would be provided by our own tactical air-to-surface missile? I cannot conceive that the additionality—to use a rather heavy-handed word which is often used in the Community—is justified.

Mr. Brazier: I understand what the hon. and learned Gentleman says about specialisation and looking within the alliances and I agree with his general point, but he must face the reality that America may not be here for all time. It is essential that at least one European country—it can only be ourselves or France—has the capability to deal with the third world scenario that we are describing. No one is likely to have the political will to use Trident against a third world threat. Trident is invisible. Whereas an aircraft can hover on the edge of a radar screen as a threat, a third world dictator could conceal Trident from his own people.

Mr. Campbell: I fancy that most third world dictators would conceal from their own people an aircraft hovering on the edge of a radar net—I doubt whether they would take prime time in downtown Baghdad to say that several European fighter aircraft were hovering just outside their airspace with tactical air-to-surface missiles.

We must assume—indeed, I am astonished that the hon. Gentleman is not prepared to concede this—that the NATO alliance will continue, and that it will continue as a nuclear alliance. One of the conundrums that we must resolve is the fact that the United States is anxious for Europe to take a greater role in dealing with its own defence but that, whenever it appears that it is more capable of doing so, the United States begins to believe that there may be no justification for remaining on continental Europe. If one is seeking a lock, or a means of binding the United States to Europe, it is more likely to be the nuclear element than anything else.

To proceed as I have outlined, with no more warheads on Trident than on Polaris, would be consistent with our obligations under the non-proliferation treaty and certainly with the NATO doctrine of minimum deterrence or nuclear weapons as weapons of last resort. That is necessarily relevant to the issue of nuclear proliferation, which must surely be the most significant threat to the integrity of the United Kingdom from a nuclear point of view.

I do not believe that the risk is necessarily one of direct attack on the United Kingdom. A nuclear war between two parties in the middle east would have a profound effect on the United Kingdom even if we did not come under direct attack. The non-proliferation treaty must be used to the maximum. We must use diplomatic and economic means, too. I believe that the United Kingdom's good faith would be a potent weapon in the battle against nuclear proliferation.

To some extent, the hon. Member for South Shields covered my next point but it is worth repeating. It is the question of the United Kingdom accepting a moratorium on nuclear testing. There are reports today that the Clinton Administration may be about to resume testing in Nevada. This week, a report from the Clinton Administration is circulating which suggests that there will be nine tests before 1996, of which three are for the United Kingdom.

In answer to questions, the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell has made it clear in the past year that the moratorium had no significance for or application to the Trident system. If the United Kingdom is embarking on further tests, the implication is that they are for another warhead. Reports from Washington suggest that, with the three tests, the United Kingdom is seeking to test a redesigned warhead which would be fitted to a new sub-strategic system, either a free-fall bomb to replace the WE177 or, if the option is kept open, a tactical air-to-surface missile. I do not believe that that is in the interests of non-proliferation. Why should tests for the United Kingdom in Nevada be in the national interests of the United States of America?

As the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) hinted in his intervention, it is time to explore the issue of nuclear co-operation with our allies—the United States and France—all of whom, at one time, have strategic deterrents at sea. It would be possible to achieve an agreement by which, without giving up an independent deterrent, the alliance could maintain a constantly available strategic system. It would require the co-ordination of patrols and the integration of doctrine and procedures. Those are not insurmountable obstacles if we bear in mind the fact that Polaris is already committed to NATO, and that the Trident system will be similarly committed once it is brought into service.

We will be able to make more realistic observations about procurement when we see the scope of the 1993 estimates. Although I do not agree with the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin) about the preference in favour of Devonport—which will hardly surprise him—I certainly agree with him about the EH101. The commitment, as he has rightly pointed out, was several years ago, and it has never been expressly withdrawn. The EH101 seems to fulfil the necessary requirements, and it is a United Kingdom aircraft with great potential for export sales.

There are some principles by which one should determine procurement issues. These are not my original thoughts but the distillation of a recent discussion with other members of the Select Committee on Defence, including the Chairman, the hon. Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), who is likely to try to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, later in the debate.

We cannot run a procurement policy in which the Ministry of Defence does not accept that it has a responsibility for the defence-industrial base—a policy in which it is accepted that, while competition is desirable, it should be the subject of intelligent application, not slavish adherence. We should have a procurement policy in which the Government robustly protect the interests of the United Kingdom in joint ventures and, perhaps most significantly, our policy should ensure the best value for money for our troops, not necessarily for the Treasury.

Those are all issues to which we shall return once the 1993 estimates are published when we will be required to focus on all the issues that I have raised and more. I feel that we sometimes deal in abstracts in these debates, whereas the reality is that the defence of the nation and the protection of the United Kingdom's interests requires not only our political contribution on how those interests are

[Mr. Campbell]

to be preserved and that defence to be maintained, but on the skill, courage and loyalty of all three of our services, which are being shown, even as we have this debate, in a number of places throughout the world. We owe it to those men and increasing number of women to show that we are worthy of their commitment.

6.13 pm

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): It must be a matter of regret that, in June 1993, we are discussing the defence estimates for 1992—almost a year after they were published and less than a month before the defence estimates for 1993. I know that Ministers are conscious of that and I look forward to our returning to a proper timetable. I hope that the 1994 defence estimates will be published next spring and that we shall be able to return to the system whereby they are published every spring and discussed, at the latest, in the summer.

Much has happened since the 1992 defence estimates were published. I should like briefly to remind the House of some of the more significant changes that have occurred. In the autumn statement last year, several hundred million pounds were sliced off the top of the defence budget for this year and the next two years. That has had a significant impact on our flexibility to respond to additional needs that crop up in the defence sphere and has made it extremely difficult for us to retain the defence capability that we need in an increasingly uncertain world.

Two battalions that had been under threat were reprieved, which was most welcome. Much less welcome was the fact that that was not specifically funded, and the danger is that the £80 million that it will cost will be offset in other ways, to which I shall return later. Although the reprieve is welcome, we are looking for more as the increasing demands of Bosnia and other United Nations commitments throw greater strain on our troops. That cannot be achieved under a defence budget that has no flexibility and is limited to what has already been assessed as today's need.

That is overshadowed by what has happened in Bosnia and by the threat of nuclear proliferation, which so far has been understated in the debate. The shadow Secretary of State read out the careful statement from the Labour party manifesto in what he described as words of almost one syllable. He did not reach a word as long as proliferation because nothing in the Labour party manifesto or in its planned statements dealt with the problem of the spread of nuclear weapons. The manifesto listed countries such as China, France and the United States and said that Labour would not remove our nuclear capability until those countries had done so, but what about the other countries that are now known to have nuclear weapons and the ones that are likely to have them in the near future? I think particularly of the Ukraine, Israel and North Korea, which must pose a serious threat to the stability of that part of the world and, therefore, a long-term threat to Britain and to the interests of our NATO allies.

Mr. Corbyn: Does the hon. Gentleman think that the development of the Trident nuclear missile system, with a fourfold increase in nuclear warheads compared with the existing Polaris system, is not itself an enormous proliferation and, indeed, a breach of the United Nations treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons?

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: It will not surprise the hon. Gentleman to learn that I do not agree. There is no doubt that Trident is necessary for our security. We cannot take it for granted that the former Soviet Union, in its break-up —*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Gentleman listened instead of interrupting, he might hear.

Mr. Corbyn: Who is the enemy?

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: The enemy could be any country of the former Soviet Union that is still armed with nuclear weapons. We cannot take it for granted that the currently benign leadership of Russia will continue. Anyone who looks at foreign affairs with the remotest degree of intelligence must accept that. The Ukraine is showing increasing reluctance to surrender its substantial nuclear arsenal to Russia, as it previously agreed. There is the danger of North Korea arming itself with nuclear weapons. There is a large number of nuclear weapons in Israel.

Mr. Cormack: And Iraq.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: As my hon. Friend says, there is the threat of Iran and Iraq, which are very close to having nuclear weapons. The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), who cannot see that we need a substantial nuclear arsenal to counter the threat of proliferation, is like a camel with its head in the sand.

Mr. Corbyn: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way again. I do not want to destroy his speech, but the only point that I should like to make in rebuttal is that roughly 170 countries—members of the United Nations—manage to live in peace and security without nuclear weapons, and many of them are not members of any alliance. Cannot the hon. Gentleman grow up and understand that nuclear weapons are a danger and that any firing of a nuclear weapon will spark off the most appalling holocaust that will kill all of us?

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I find it extremely hard to answer such a fatuous point. The hon. Gentleman must be aware that the NATO alliance has secured peace for western Europe. He says that there is peace throughout the world. I do not know whether he goes—*[Interruption.]*.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. There have been too many sedentary observations.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker. We have had enough of that, and I shall get on with the serious speech that I intended to make.

I shall now deal with some smaller but not insignificant recent events, the first of which is the decision to withdraw from Belize. I believe that that decision is mistaken, not least because, as has been pointed out, Guatemala cannot be considered stable at the moment, and when a country is unstable that must throw doubt on whether any assurances given by the regime of the moment can be relied upon even in the short and medium term.

Our presence in Belize has an enormous value, way beyond the military element. It is welcomed by the Belizeans, by the United States and by the previous Guatemalan Administration—I am waiting to hear what the present Administration feel about it. I believe that, until we decided to withdraw, the United States, the Belizeans and the Guatemalans were all begging us to stay, but now that the Government have decided to withdraw,

all those Governments are obligingly falling into line and announcing that of course they understand and they can perfectly well do without us. However, the troops and RAF personnel in that part of the world, and especially the guard ship stationed there, all play a significant role in anti-drugs operations, in bolstering the British presence in central America and in securing peace in that part of the world.

The withdrawal is short-sighted, and my right hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), who was until recently Minister of State at the Foreign Office, told other hon. Members and myself when we went to see him that it is all for the sake of saving £9 million a year at most. That figure does not take into account any increased aid that we might feel that we have to give to Belize by way of overseas development grants and so on so as to offset what will be lost by the withdrawal of our troop presence.

I welcome the fact that my right hon. Friends have decided not to withdraw altogether but to maintain Belize as a training area. The Select Committee on Defence will go there in December and when we return I shall report to the House what we find.

Sir Jerry Wiggin: My hon. Friend has left out one important factor—Belize is the only theatre in which British troops receive any training in jungle warfare. This will be the first time since the end of the second world war that no jungle warfare training is available.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I did not leave that factor out, because we are not withdrawing from the jungle training element; there will still be jungle training facilities in Belize. However, I doubt whether we have costed the true cost of sending people out to use those facilities and offset it against what we allegedly save by bringing people back regularly. I suspect that the decision represents a frantic effort by the Government to ease the emergency tour plot gap. Clearly, it will do that to some small degree.

The Defence Select Committee was in Cyprus a fortnight ago and I found there, as everywhere else we go, the troops are stretched to the utmost limit. Half our troops stationed at sovereign bases are not at the bases at all, but carrying out emergency tour plot operations in the Falklands. That means that they have had to take their families from this country out to Cyprus, and then promptly abandon them so that they can do a six-month tour in the Falklands, leaving their young wives extremely unsettled in Cyprus, in a strange place in which they do not especially want to be.

That is bad enough, but I am told that at least one unit will have to go away not once but twice during its Cyprus tour. That is an example of the difficulties that our troops face because of the shortage of infantry available to carry out all our tasks in Northern Ireland and elsewhere. My right hon. Friends in Government will have to tackle those problems.

The Select Committee on Defence will keep a close eye on developments in that sphere, and I shall not rest until the emergency tour plot gap is back to the 24 months that is supposed to be the minimum, rather than the 17 months that is the present average and the 10 or 11-month gap that can sometimes occur.

Mr. Wolfson: My hon. Friend was talking about families being abandoned for periods in Cyprus and other places. Does he agree that that has a deleterious effect on morale, and therefore affects a person's decision whether to remain in the services or to get out? Does that not represent a cost to the services to be offset against possible savings?

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: My hon. Friend is right, of course. There is a distinct danger that morale will sink to the point at which we can no longer sustain the kind of troop forces that we need. That is especially important among those with specific skills, such as senior non-commissioned officers. People of that age and rank tend to have young wives and children, and substantial family commitments. When we were in Northern Ireland, we saw evidence of the fact that if too great a stress is put on family life by removing too regularly the man of the house for six months at a time, it is the wife who finally puts her foot down and says, "I cannot put up with this any longer. You must leave the Army and find a better job so that you can be at home." One reason why service men are not leaving in greater numbers is the recession, so I fear that as we come out of recession we shall find it harder to keep troops with the necessary expertise, unless we can put that problem to bed.

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon): Time and again, we have heard Ministers repeating the aspiration for a 24-month interval between tour duties. Has my hon. Friend or the Defence Committee seen any evidence that that aim may be achieved within the draw-down period to 1995?

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I think that it is common ground that that will certainly not be achieved before 1995, and the Defence Committee has been unpersuaded by the Government's assurances from time to time that things will get better after 1995. I see no evidence in the detailed figures that that will happen, and it will certainly not happen if there are any other demands on our troops in other parts of the world—for example, if we have to increase our forces in Bosnia or honour some other United Nations commitment. I see little prospect of our getting anywhere near a 24-month minimum emergency tour plot gap in the foreseeable future.

I shall now consider how we are getting on with some of the specific points raised in the Select Committee's report on the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1992. I shall concentrate first on equipment. We are still waiting to hear details of the update of the Challenger 1 tank fleet. There have been many promises that Challenger 1 would be upgraded and be close to being as good as Challenger 2, and substantially cheaper. That announcement was made two years ago, and so far as I am aware we are not close to implementing it. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement will be able to make a statement on that when he replies to the debate.

Likewise, as my hon. Friend the Member for Western-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin) said, the EH101 contract was promised by Lord Younger six years ago, and we are no closer to seeing that. It is time that a firm decision was made. I endorse everything that my hon. Friend said about the respective merits of the systems, and I hope that we shall not have to wait even as long as until the end of the year before there is a distinct EH101 contract on the books and we know where we are going. The support helicopter role is critical to any future defence planning for this country, and at the moment we are a long way away from having anything effective in place.

[Sir Nicholas Bonsor]

The Eurofighter, now called the Eurofighter 2000, is apparently on track now. When I last heard how the costings were going, I understood that I was being told that the cost was 13 per cent. lers than that of the original European fighter aircraft; yet when I see figures showing how the costings are going, they rise inexorably, and faster than inflation. I hope that my hon. Friend will enlighten me as to how we are achieving a 13 per cent. saving on the original cost when the true cost of the project is rising at such an alarming speed. I have no doubt that EFA 2000 will be an excellent aircraft, and that we need it, but we must keep proper cost control and make certain that our partners honour their part of the deal, and we are not left holding the baby.

On naval matters, the Upholder class submarine is giving me cause for concern. I am not at all clear what the plans for it are. It is certainly true that we would not order that type now because of the change in the strategic needs for the Navy and the fact that nuclear submarines can fulfil most of the roles. None the less, we have got them and they are first-class submarines. I do not believe that we would get very much for them if we wanted to sell them. I look for some assurances that we will keep the Upholder submarines, keeping at least one of them operational, so that we have the skills necessary to benefit from the particular advantages that diesel submarines offer, with the rest being in a state of "extended readiness"—something on which I have commented before. We should have a diesel submarine fleet available when needed, particularly for coastal work.

With regard to personnel, the Committee has looked very closely at the housing and resettlement programme for those who have been made redundant. I look forward to hearing what further progress has been made on that front. I should also like to hear whether the Herford job centre is to be extended for two years, as we were told it might be. Everything that we have heard about the centre shows that it is doing a magnificent job in helping people who were in Germany to find jobs back home. I hope that the centre will be continued for as long as a need for it is apparent.

Pay is also very important. We have 1·5 per cent. for this year. The pay review body was not allowed to look at the merits of that award. I should like an assurance that it will be given back its remit to set the right level of pay for the armed forces, starting in 1994-95.

We also looked at the transitions work programme—paragraphs 4.23 to 4.25 of our report—and the £1·14 billion allocated in 1991 for new building and refurbishment. The Committee was worried that it was proving difficult to set up the programme within the time allocated and that money could not be rolled forward when it was not used. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister would tell us how much was spent in 1992-93, whether the unspent balance was brought forward and how the £460 million allocated for this financial year, 1993-94, will be spent. As we said in our second report, either the money must be found to give the members of the services decent accommodation or they must be given more freedom to use their own resources to create it—in my view, that method is grossly underused. We have some magnificent people with magnificent skills in the armed forces, and too often they are prevented, in a way that is quite unnecessary, from using those skills to enhance the standard of their own accommodation. I hope that my hon. Friend will take a close look at that and give me the assurance that I request.

The Committee is concerned that the civilian element of the armed forces is not being run down quite as fast as the sharp-end element. There is nothing very unusual about that. When people are given the task of cutting back, it is most unlikely that they will cut back on themselves first. We were given assurances at our oral session that the civilian cuts would match the sharp-end cuts, but there are still, I believe, 135,000 civilians in the Ministry of Defence. It is by far the largest part that is left of any of the individual services, and I feel that the House would look askance were it to find that the civilian staff were not being run down in proper proportion to the armed forces.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): The Chairman of the Defence Select Committee seems to be categorising all civilian employees of the Ministry of Defence as box-wallahs in Whitehall, as it were, and part of the tail, not the teeth. Most of those civilians are involved in the repair or supply of equipment. I shall come to the role of some of them later, should I be fortunate enough to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I can certainly reassure the hon. Gentleman that I do not want to give any false impressions. Of course, the civilians do an invaluable job in our armed forces. None the less, it remains true that the rundown has to be seen to be fair and balanced and the civilian element must be seen to be making the same kind of sacrifice as the rest of the armed forces are asked to make.

Today, we have had announcements about the reserves. I am glad to be able to welcome a great deal of what my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State said. I specifically welcome the assurance that he has given the House as to his personal commitment to ensuring the future of our reserve forces. It is clearly essential, when our regular forces are being run down, that our reserve forces are bolstered. That is the only way in which we shall be able to maintain our long-term capabilities. My right hon. and learned Friend's assurances on that in general terms are most welcome, as is his statement about the widening of the role that can now be played by the Territorial Army and the other reserve forces. The TA has wanted for a long time to be given operational duties in peacetime, and I very much welcome its widened role.

I take some of the points that my hon. Friends have made about the difficulty of getting the detail right. I was pleased that my right hon. and learned Friend said that he was determined to have a consultation period and to make sure that the detail was agreed specifically by those directly concerned in the operation of the new system, so that none of the dangers and pitfalls that could flow from the change, if it were not properly handled, resulted.

I very much welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's statement that the details of the naval and RAF volunteer reserve forces that he has announced today are flexible, and that these are indeed consultation papers and not writ in stone, because I share some of the fears and reservations that have been expressed in the House today as to the consequences of some of the details.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers), I cannot argue with the logic that says that we

cannot have minesweepers which are obsolete and for which there is no proper role. It clearly must be right, therefore, to look again at the role of the Royal Naval Reserve, what sort of vessels it should have and what they should do. However, I am reluctant to accept, without looking at the matter in more detail, that it is right to remove all ships from the RNVR and to say that their only future role will be maintenance or land based, or, in the case of about 500, that they will be attached to Royal Navy regular ships. It seems to me that the RNVR role will be very difficult to maintain, as will the enthusiasm of the people who join it, if they do not have some kind of ships of their own. They need not be terribly expensive—for example, coastal patrol vessels or something small but up to date. In any case, we must look at that matter in detail. There is nothing to be gained by speculation today as to what might be the best way forward on that front.

I wish to make one point about the Royal Air Force volunteer reserve. Today, the Defence Committee went down to the Army Air Corps, where there is a very large TA flying reserve unit; 666 Squadron is made up entirely, as I understand it, of volunteer airmen, and they undertake 28 per cent. of all United Kingdom land force flying commitments that the Army Air Corps undertakes. If that can be done in the Army, why can we not have a flying reserve in the RAF? It is something that most other countries—certainly the United States—have. We have a great many people in civilian life with flying skills, which I am sure could be adapted and used to military advantage, and I do not understand why we have always turned our backs on the idea of looking closely at an RAF flying reserve. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench will adopt a more flexible and imaginative attitude to an RAF volunteer reserve than has been shown for several years. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I am sure that the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing), who has his back to me, is nevertheless paying attention to every word that I say.

I turn finally to the other report which the Defence Committee tagged as relevant on the Order Paper—our fifth report, which we agreed yesterday and which takes forward the question of Army manpower, in particular infantry numbers. The Government's reply to our second report is attached.

I hope that hon. Members will take the trouble to read the Government's reply to our second report and our further comments because, frankly, I am not happy with the present situation. Some of the answers seemed to me and other members of the Committee to be singularly weak. For example, the Government have claimed that, because the level of forces in Germany is being reduced, our commitments are likewise being reduced in parallel. That is simply not the case, because almost all our troops in Germany are at least double, triple or quadruple hatted.

The fact that our troops will not be in Germany does not mean that they will not still be used on emergency tour plots for United Nations duties, other duties, the rapid reaction corps and so on. The fact that they will no longer be needed in Germany does not mean that we will need fewer soldiers. The fact that they were there in the fore on paper—they were never there in fact, although they were there in paper strength—was a weak reply to our point about infantry numbers.

The same can be said about the emergency tour plot interval to which I have already referred. There is no doubt that we need to retain that as one of the criteria to examine when we assess whether the Army has adequate strength. The Government did not appear to be happy with that in their reply to our second report.

We welcome a broader approach to that matter because, if the emergency tour plot gap is taken globally, it does not reflect the true facts. Indeed, it understates the problems faced by individual soldiers, many of whom are on attachment from one unit to another and, therefore, have a shorter emergency tour plot gap than they would appear to have on paper if they had always served with the unit to which they are appended. I should like to see figures for nights out of bed on a much more specific basis than any that are available at present.

I refer to the add-back of 3,000 which was announced earlier. Of course, that add-back is extremely welcome. When we look at the details, it is difficult to find out exactly how those 3,000 come to exist. There are 1,300 added back for the two battalions and there is no dispute about that. However, if we look further, we discover that the 300 who will do public duty as increments to the guard battalions were already promised before the add-back, so that 300 is double counting. There are another 300 to cover an increase in the establishment of armoured regiments. That was already agreed in the autumn, so once again there appears to be double counting.

It is not clear whether we will reach the level of 119,000 that was promised. I seek an assurance from my right hon. Friends that that will be the case. I ask them clearly to tell the House whether those 119,000 are supposed to last beyond 1995 or whether it is planned to revert to 116,000 after 1995, because there seems to be no sign in any plans of any funding for the additional strength beyond 1995. That covers most of the major points that I wanted to make.

Before I finish, I shall mention the "Panorama" programme on the Atomic Weapons Establishment—in case anyone saw it. That was the most appalling piece of television that I have seen for some time. The programme grossly misled those who watched it. For example, there was a magnificent picture of members of the Committee getting out of their cars and going into Aldermaston. Members of the Committee were not being photographed—it was a lot of slimmer and much fitter gentlemen who leapt out of their cars, or, obviously, a lot of out-of-work actors. They ran from some smart limousines into a building that was alleged to be Aldermaston. In fact, my colleagues and I limped out of a large bus and hobbled gently into Aldermaston. There is no proper comparison at all.

Much more seriously, the programme makers claimed to have seen a leaked document to which the Committee was in the process of agreeing. It is true that the sentence that they produced was accurate. However, they photographed a document which, clearly, was not the report that it was alleged to be, but was a mock-up of a much earlier report from the Committee. Furthermore, I do not believe that the programme makers had seen the Committee's report, because, when it is published, they will find that there is more interesting reading in it than the innocuous sentence that they put in the programme.

[Sir Nicholas Bonsor]

The most significant point is that the programme makers had another actor, who was purported to be a civil servant, announcing that the Committee had been deliberately misled by the Government. I am satisfied that we were not deliberately misled by anyone.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish) *rose*——

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I shall give way in a moment.

I accept that there is a reluctance sometimes on the part of people giving evidence to us to disclose everything that we want to know. However, I can assure the House that on that visit there was absolutely no attempt deliberately to deceive the Committee and I am happy to report that to the House. Although there are matters in what we found that we will certainly continue to investigate, I am satisfied that there was no attempt deliberately to mislead the House.

Mr. Foulkes: I also saw the "Panorama" programme. I immediately knew that it was a reconstruction because of the slim figures who were meant to be the members of the Committee. Does the hon. Gentleman agree, nevertheless, that the reconstructions with actors making some serious statements, the Health and Safety Executive official and the person reading a statement by a civil servant, and all the allegations about health and safety, raised some genuine concerns? It is clear from what the hon. Gentleman said that those concerns will be reflected in the report. In the light of all that, is not it unfortunate that the Minister of State for Defence Procurement did not take the opportunity of appearing on "Panorama" and dealing with some of those serious allegations?

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: To deal with the hon. Gentleman's first point, it is right that some of the comments made by the Health and Safety Executive have resulted in further questions that need to be asked. The Committee reviews Aldermaston on an annual basis and we shall continue to do so. We will examine any serious points in detail.

To deal with the hon. Gentleman's second point, my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement was absolutely right not to appear on the "Panorama" programme. I would not have gone anywhere near it. Indeed, I suspect that one of the reasons why the programme came out in the form that it did was that the request by the programme makers to be allowed to accompany us into Aldermaston was turned down unanimously by all members of the Committee. I do not think that the "Panorama" report was fair, accurate or properly researched. I hope that that answers the hon. Gentleman's question.

I have detained the House long enough. I have been the Chairman of the Committee for almost a year. I thank my colleagues on the Committee, all of whom work much harder than other hon. Members would undoubtedly give us credit for. It has been a useful year and I look forward to continuing the work of the Committee. I especially thank the staff who have worked extraordinarily hard to produce good and well-constructed reports for the Committee to vet and table in the House. The work that is done by the staff of the Select Committee on Defence and, indeed, all Select Committees is something to which the House should pay great tribute.

6.48 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I too watched the "Panorama" programme, which seemed to raise a whole series of quesions that should be answered. I hope that the Committee's report, when published, will answer some of them.

It seems a little ironic that, increasingly, television programmes suggest that Government Departments and others are misleading people, yet the programme makers do not stick to what seems to be a basic principle—that they should make it clear that they are using library film from the past or reconstructions. It would be simple to show that at the bottom of the screen. If the programme makers expect other people to tell the truth, they should do the same.

There is an odd contrast in the House tonight between now and what happened earlier. During Treasury questions, there was a great deal of scrutiny of public expenditure and the Government's willingness to examine in great detail how much money is being spent on things such as invalidity benefit.

When we turn to defence, the Government's approach is wholly different. My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) gave a long list of cases of mismanagement in which the Government seem able to throw money at problems without the same scrutiny. If we want good defence forces, as I am sure we all do, it is important that we exercise the same level of scrutiny over expenditure on them as over all other Government expenditure.

I turn now to the way in which the armed forces have reviewed the pay office. Part of it is within Tameside, in which part of my constituency falls. There was considerable concern at the Government's decision to centralise the pay office. I understand the Government's logic in saying that it is better for civilians to deal with pay. It is also logical to deal with it in one office rather than in five or six centres around the country. However, it is odd that the Government did not think through the whole process from the beginning.

The Government started to civilianise the activity in a series of different centres, and then centralised it in one place. To have recruited people for the past two years to the Ashton office, admittedly to process allowances rather than pay, and then, part way through the recruitment process, to announce that a new national centre was being considered alarmed my constituents.

Obviously, Tameside council was particularly concerned at the possibility of losing jobs from the area. My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) and other Members representing Tameside made representations to the Government. The right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton) kindly saw the deputation. We were courteously received and the council made a good presentation.

However, part way through the presentation, it became clear that the Government wanted not a new site but an existing building. Sadly, Tameside could not find a new building for the pay office. We left a little disappointed, but, as representatives of Greater Manchester, we were well aware that there were many other empty offices in the area.

Rightly, Roy Oldham, the leader of Tameside council, got in touch with other leaders of councils in Greater Manchester, and eventually the alternative of Europa

house in Stockport was proposed. We submitted the proposal and, much to our surprise, the Government, having half decided that the office would go to Glasgow, announced that they were having second thoughts and were considering the proposal.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *indicated assent.*

Mr. Bennett: I am glad to see the right hon. Gentleman's agreement that I am giving a fair precis of events.

There was considerable concern among the people who worked in Ashton when, at the Scottish Conservative party conference, it was announced that the office would go to Scotland. It seems to me and the stewards concerned that, despite what was supposed to be a financial appraisal of the situation, suddenly a political decision was made. I do not complain if decisions are made on the basis of wheeler-dealing and politics, but I am concerned when it is claimed that decisions are made purely on economic grounds, and it seems to me that the present proposals are not based on economic grounds.

I particularly want to raise with the Minister the problem facing many of my constituents who work in the pay office. They have been told that they can relocate to Glasgow but often their spouse also works. Indeed, by the nature of the pay levels, it is likely that both members of the household would work.

It is not much use to offer one member of the household the opportunity to relocate to Glasgow if it means that the other must give up a job. If it is necessary to recruit extra staff for the relocated office, if it eventually ends up in Glasgow, the Government should consider offering the new jobs first to the spouses of people who may be able to relocate if both could get jobs. Otherwise, the offer of relocation and of paying for people to move is an empty gesture. I am not satisfied that the relocation of the pay office to Scotland is the most effective use of resources.

Today, the Stonewall Trust has been in touch with me. It is concerned about a document it refers to as "Defense Counsel Instructions ICRM 2/87", which is supposed to deal with the question of homosexuals in the armed forces. The debate on this issue in the United States has not been particularly helpful, but if what the Stonewall Trust suggests in that document is correct, we are dealing with the issue in an even more squalid way here. Will the Minister ensure that there is a copy of the document in the Library so that Members can look at it? It may be more appropriate to deal with the issue in the debate on discipline in the armed forces late on Monday night.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) raised the question of nuclear tests. It is amazing that the Secretary of State could go through a long speech without mentioning that matter. I understand that we are in direct negotiations with the United States of America on whether we can carry out three more nuclear tests. If we are in favour of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, the sooner we have an effective worldwide test ban, the better.

We have a moratorium which includes most of the countries involved. It is sad if there is pressure on the United States to start testing again. The danger is that, if the United States starts testing again, it will give an excuse to people in Russia and elsewhere who would like to carry out further tests. Certainly, some of the stories coming out of the old Soviet Union about the state of some areas where nuclear tests were carried out make it clear that it would be sad if more tests were carried out there.

There is no justification for it. We are told that President Clinton is proposing to Congress six further American tests and three further British tests. I do not know whether it is correct, but we are told that the Americans need to test the reliability of existing weapons. I cannot see why that is necessary. If they say that they will sign up to a comprehensive test ban treaty, there should now be sufficient scientific ways of verifying that weapons can do what they are supposed to do. Therefore, the tests are not needed.

Our argument is that we want not to verify the reliability of our existing weapons, but to develop the possibility of a new weapon of some sort or a modified form of the WE177. That is wholly in contravention of the non-proliferation treaty. I thought that we had signed it on the basis that we would not seek a new set of nuclear weapons.

It would be sad if the Americans agreed to start testing again. It would be particularly sad if they allowed us to carry out three tests, not to verify the reliability of our old weapon systems, but to develop a new system. If it is legitimate for Britain to plead that it needs a new system, surely it is legitimate for all sorts of other countries to plead the same. That would lead to the spread of those weapons. I therefore plead with the Government to stop begging the Americans to let us conduct more tests. Let us accept that, for the future of the world, no further nuclear tests are necessary.

We have Trident. Used with one warhead, it represents a sub-strategic nuclear deterrent. We do not need a new free-fall bomb. Let us say that, if we are to continue with nuclear weapons, the Trident system is sufficient, remembering that it can be modified for a sub-strategic role. In other words, we can stop wasting money on the development of more nuclear weapons.

I have always argued that we should go further and make it clear that, for non-proliferation purposes, we can do without nuclear weapons. In any event, let us say once and for all that we do not intend to put extra warheads on Trident missiles. The level of nuclear weapons we have, including Polaris missiles, is more than enough to provide us with a deterrent.

Given all the problems that exist on the Aldermaston production line, if we were committed to producing far fewer warheads, it might be easier to improve safety and production facilities there. We must consider decommissioning our Polaris and other nuclear submarines.

The way in which we are cutting expenditure on defence is bound to be causing distress to the defence industries. That is why we must search for alternative jobs for those who are, or have been, employed in those industries. If the Government will not agree with some of the Opposition's proposals for the alternative use of large numbers of people involved in the defence industries, they should at least consider decommissioning old nuclear submarines and the creation of new jobs.

We must give greater thought to the ways in which arms are proliferating worldwide. Particularly frightening are the number of arms from eastern Europe and the old Soviet Union that are being sold. As the hon. Member for Western-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin) pointed out, there are 28 wars going on in the world. The more we can reduce the quantity of second-hand arms being sold, the safer the

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world will become. Perhaps we might consider buying some of those arms and dismantling them. That would be a better use of our money than some of the other activities that we are undertaking.

A sad aspect of not having a comprehensive review is that we have not examined the need for defence land in this country. I have often referred to this subject. The Ministry of Defence still argues that it needs more land for training purposes. Although I do not believe that that claim can be sustained, a proper view would enable us to see how much defence land is being used for training and whether more could be released, in this crowded island, for the public to enjoy for recreational purposes.

Considerable parts of the north Pennines are no longer being used for manoeuvres. As a result of past exercises, many unexploded weapons must be dealt with. I hope that they can be cleared out of the way and the land made available for recreational use.

I pay tribute to my many constituents who served with the Cheshires in Bosnia. It is important for us to carry out humanitarian roles in the world. They worked in extremely difficult circumstances, and we can be proud of the way in which they carried out their duties. We can be equally proud of those who replaced them.

7.3 pm

Mr. Archie Hamilton (Epsom and Ewell): I am grateful to the Secretary of State for the kind remarks that he made about me and my service at the Ministry of Defence. It was a great pleasure for me to work with my right hon. and learned Friend and my fellow Ministers. I also thank the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) for his kind remarks.

I congratulate the Minister of State, who now has what I consider to be the best job in Government. He is ideally qualified for it. He has already had some experience of working in Northern Ireland with our troops, and the fact that he brings his expertise as an accountant to his tasks at the Ministry of Defence will prove useful to him when he looks hard at some of the investment appraisals that are put before him. I am sure that he will find the job as enjoyable as I found it.

I shall concentrate on the major argument over defence expenditure, which is the balance between resources, capabilities and commitments. Traditionally, in the days when the United Kingdom was positively threatened by the Warsaw pact, we began our consideration of the position with the commitments that we needed to defend these islands. Those commitments were, in great measure, tied up with our membership of NATO and the joint security that we received by co-operating with our allies. In addition, we had overseas commitments, so we worked backwards and considered how much money we should spend on defence.

As the Secretary of State pointed out, we spend about £24 billion on defence. A similar amount is spent by the Germans and French. We must not overlook the fact that their economies are larger than ours, so as a percentage of the gross national product, they are spending less than we are. I have no argument with the size of the defence budget. There are good reasons why we spend such a large sum on defence, not least because we have a nuclear deterrent and continue to have a number of overseas commitments. We also have professional forces, and they have proved themselves to be—for example, in the Gulf—most effective.

Nor should we overlook the fact that we are living this year with a public sector borrowing requirement of £50 billion. It is therefore unrealistic to expect us to spend more on defence than we are spending today. Here I question the attitude of my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), the Chairman of the Select Committee, who has constantly criticised decisions that the Government have taken. For example, he criticised the addback of two battalions and the fact that the increase in numbers of 3,000 was not funded.

There is no way in which any change in defence will be funded by extra money from outside, and it is unrealistic to expect otherwise. If we are to address the defence budget as a whole and claim that certain measures should be taken to increase our capabilities, we must find the money from within the defence budget. It would be unrealistic to consider the problem in any other way. The fixed point from which we should operate is that represented by the resources that are available.

What are we trying to achieve from our defence expenditure? It is important not to forget that the primary purpose of that expenditure is the defence of the United Kingdom. I am the first to acknowledge that the threat to this country has receded dramatically. The Soviet Union no longer exists, and the Warsaw pact has disintegrated. There are good reasons for thinking that the threats to Britain today are minimal.

But it is impossible to forecast the future, and we do not know what threats will emerge. For example, it is difficult to foresee where Russia will go—whether democracy will hold there, or whether it will become more threatening to its European neighbours—so the second priority of defence must be to keep our capabilities. That is a very expensive business indeed. I should be distressed if, because of other pressures in defence, we started to lose capabilities, such as our ability to wage anti-submarine warfare.

Anti-submarine warfare is no longer a great defence priority; Russian submarines are patrolling much less frequently, so the need to try to find them has radically reduced. We do not know, however, about future submarine deployment. We know very well that other countries are buying submarines, so we may be faced with great threats that we cannot foresee. I would be extremely concerned if we lost our anti-submarine warfare capability.

The Navy and the Air Force have great air defence capability—for example, the low-level bombing capability of the Tornado GR1s. Such capability is critical for the defence of the United Kingdom and that of our interests elsewhere.

We should remember that, when we talk about commitments, we are talking not about our commitment to defend the United Kingdom, but about our commitments to try to bring peace to different parts of the world and those to the United Nations. Our commitments are like a piece of string—they are as long as one wants to make them.

It is widely acknowledged that British troops are probably the best in the world. They are undoubtedly the best to undertake a peace-keeping, peace-making operation, because their experience in Northern Ireland enables them to deal with extremely difficult situations.

That is why they were described in Bosnia by a well-known reporter as being "stunningly" the best troops on the ground.

Everyone wants British troops to play a role in the world, but we must limit our commitments, or they could serve in an unlimited number of theatres of war. Mention has already been made of the 28 different conflicts that are now going on. Are we to be involved in all of them? If so, our troops will be overstretched.

We must meet commitments according to our available resources. The defence budget of £24 billion will not increase. I certainly would not advocate, however, that it should be reduced dramatically. It is essential that we maintain our capabilities because, by the nature of defence, they are an insurance policy. We must, however, consider carefully the commitments that we may be asked to fulfil.

My hon. Friend the Member for Upminster criticised the decision to withdraw troops from Belize. If we do not constantly review our commitments, we will operate a ratchet—our troops will be sent all over the world. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State referred to Cyprus, where British troops have been stationed for the past 25 years. For some reason it is not possible to share the United Nations commitment in Cyprus with anyone else, but we have, finally, reduced the number of troops serving there.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I do not disagree in principle with my right hon. Friend, but he is slightly contradicting his own theme. He has told the House that we should assess our defence needs and act accordingly. In almost the next breath, however, he said that he considered that the budget of £24 billion was the one within which we must operate. Surely that must mean that we will have to cut our cloth to suit the financial limit that my right hon. Friend has artificially imposed upon it.

I accept that we must review our commitments regularly, but we are a member of the United Nations Security Council and we have enormous responsibilities in that role. Our international status and standing depends to a great extent on the magnificent work of our armed forces. My right hon. Friend should accept that we must have a degree of flexibility in a changing world. One cannot allow a Treasury ceiling of £24 billion to be the controlling factor on the size of our forces.

Mr. Hamilton: I am glad that my hon. Friend has raised that point, because that is the nub of my argument with him. It is totally unrealistic to expect any more money for the defence budget. A major outside threat to the security of the United Kingdom would have to arise for that budget to be increased. I do not foresee that happening in the next 10 years. It is therefore unlikely that the defence budget will increase beyond £24 billion. We must accept that figure and work back from it. The result is a tremendous pressure on commitments.

It is interesting to consider who is contributing to the operations in Bosnia. The French, the Canadians, the British and the Spanish have sent troops, but none of our other European partners have done so. For some reason, they seem to believe that the conflict does not involve them. We are being asked to carry an unfair burden. We should remember that one is never paid the full costs of deploying troops on behalf of the UN, so that costs the Exchequer money. We must ensure that our European partners play a larger role in the peace-keeping operation, especially if it is considered to be a European one.

We should not forget our major peace-keeping operation in Northern Ireland. That operation takes up 19,000 troops, many of whom are rotated and are part of the emergency tour plot, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Upminister referred. For every one battalion in Northern Ireland, one must decide whether one needs four or five others to ensure that the rotation works.

We must take a hard look at our other commitments. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster would acknowledge that our undertaking in Bosnia contributes to the pressures on the emergency tour plot. It is another arduous commitment.

Quite apart from the pressures on the British Army, I believe that there is no military solution to the problems of Bosnia. The military can only operate there as long as they have the basic agreement of the warring factions to do so. The second that we try to impose our will on those factions by military means, we will be drawn into a civil war. I do not want to talk about numbers, because there is no limit on the number of troops who could be sent to Bosnia. That would only mean that we were drawn into a long, bloody war, which ultimately we would lose.

We must try to disabuse people of the idea that all that needs to be done is to use air power to shoot up a few Serbian artillery positions. They believe that that would result, somehow, in a change in Serbian attitudes. That attitude would change—for a week. The Serbs would then regroup and change tactics.

We must never forget that Yugoslav defence under Tito was based on guerrilla tactics. The plan was to withdraw to the mountains and use weapons kept in massive underground arsenals, which still exist, mostly in Serbian areas. The plan was to harry any Russian attack—that is what the Yugoslavs were worried about—from guerrilla positions in the mountains.

There is no way in which we can impose a military solution on Bosnia, and there are great dangers in thinking that we can. We have done a magnificent job of distributing aid under the present system. That has been achieved on the basis of the warring factions accepting the presence of our troops and not regarding them as the enemy. If we start thinking that, by reinforcing our troops, we can impose our will, we will be faced with an extremely disappointing reaction.

I thank my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence for having kept us out of Bosnia. Long may that continue.

7.18 pm

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): I am always pleased to have the opportunity to speak in this debate, not least because it enables me to pay tribute to our security forces for the magnificent job that they do throughout the world, but particularly in my part of the United Kingdom—Northern Ireland.

I am privileged to have first-hand experience of the work that the Army does, both in and out of uniform. I never cease to marvel at the restraint that our security services display in the most difficult circumstances. But of

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course, Northern Ireland is not, as we have heard this afternoon, the only place in which the security forces face great danger.

We have just listened to the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton) speak about the Bosnian conflict. I want to mention the Royal Irish Regiment, which served as part of the force in Bosnia at the time that the Cheshire Regiment was there. It is sometimes forgotten that the Royal Irish Regiment has played a vital role in Bosnia.

My colleagues and I have a deep concern about our forces in Bosnia. We have been unable to detect any coherent policy governing how those forces might be able to protect themselves. We know that there is a fluid situation in Bosnia, and that it is hard to lay down specific terms under which our security services can operate. But it is wrong and dangerous for our soldiers to have to appear to improvise in situations such as occurred recently when British forces were protecting a large Muslim convoy.

When one hears of our soldiers being disarmed, one waits in trepidation for a real tragedy. Already, our forces in Bosnia have been forced to open fire. Yet we know that they are not there in adequate numbers to protect themselves in a similar situation. I fear an occasion when our forces will be overwhelmed, and I dread hearing each day about the situation in which they find themselves.

My party supports our nation's contribution to and participation in United Nations' operations. But that should not mean that we require our soldiers to operate in limbo. Nor should participation oblige us to guarantee further reinforcements for Bosnia. There are more wealthy nations than Britain which are not playing their part, and far too much of the burden has fallen upon our own forces.

It is always a grave matter to commit one's security services to a theatre of open warfare. It should not be done —humanitarian considerations notwithstanding—without a clearly defined military objective and adequate military competence in terms of their self-defence.

I listened to what the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell said. I agree with him that we cannot force the warring factions in Bosnia into submission. The point that I am making is different. If our forces are providing humanitarian assistance, we have a responsibility to ourselves and to those forces that I do not believe has been met.

I was particularly pleased, and I know that the voluntary reserves will be pleased, to hear what the Secretary of State said about their opportunities to volunteer again for active service. But I have considerable sympathy with the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier), who rightly speaks against the need for the reserves to have to volunteer twice. That is patent good sense. We all know the first thing that happens when one volunteers and gets into uniform—one is encouraged never to volunteer for anything again.

A country with a finite defence budget should not be paying for the training of what is hopefully that very small number of volunteers who will always depend on others to respond in an emergency. Under the Secretary of State's arrangement, they could enjoy an exciting social and—irrespective of what some hon. Members may think—tolerably well paid hobby without any real commitment.

I do not want what I have said to reflect on the vast majority of volunteers who have a solid commitment, but we know from experience that there are those who do not share that commitment. Under the Secretary of State's new arrangement, I believe that that problem will increase.

The hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin) was more pessimistic, but I believe that worldwide conflict is unlikely to occur again within our lifetime on a scale that might have been expected no longer than four or five years ago. The likelihood of less widespread conflicts means that there is unlikely to be massive mobilisation. The volunteer reserves will not be called up in great numbers. Hence, a real and tangible obligation on every volunteer must be retained within the Secretary of State's arrangement for the reserves.

I shall briefly return home, to the situation in Northern Ireland. "Options for Change" specified the need to amalgamate the Royal Irish Rangers and the Ulster Defence Regiment. That caused considerable misgivings in Northern Ireland. My party and I as the person with responsibility to speak defence, looked carefully at the proposal and we saw many benefits for Northern Ireland in such an amalgamation. If the Royal Irish Rangers had been lost, Northern Ireland would have been left, for the first time in hundreds of years, with no tangible and total integration within the military system of the United Kingdom. We would have been left without a line regiment.

The leader of my party and I went to the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell, and discussed the amalgamation at some length. I received assurances that, when the amalgamation had taken place, the Ulster Defence Regiment as it was, or the Royal Irish Regiment as it is, would not be interfered with again, and there would be a period of stabilisation for at least a year. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Defence did not effectively get that message across to the General Officer Commanding and other senior officers in Northern Ireland.

The amalgamation was meat and drink to the armchair generals; those who have the ability to undermine the confidence of the people of Northern Ireland it signalled the diminution of the effectiveness and the size of what had been the Ulster Defence Regiment. Among sensible people, there was certainly a feeling that at least the part-time element within the regiment would be run down. That did not help matters.

A broken promise, even if it is done with the best intentions or through necessity, will diminish the confidence of certain sections of our community in Northern Ireland, and that section of the community will begin to look elsewhere for its protection against terrorism.

I do not want to exaggerate, but to some extent the present unease within what is loosely termed the loyalist population derives from the fact that people are not assured of their protection. It does not matter what we say or how often we tell them, they see things in practical terms. They see the diminishing of the part-time element within the Royal Irish Regiment, and they start to be afraid and wonder whether they should seek protection elsewhere.

The Minister must quickly ensure that the regiment, and particularly the part-time element, is sustained. One of

the immediate ways he can do that is by finding a means of recruiting to the officer corps within the regiment, as it has been neglected.

It is a problem of 23 years of continuous service. The first paragraph of page 27 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates" relates to the amalgamation:

"A major objective is to create in the home service battalions an even more professional, effective and flexible security force, operating in support of the RUC and in the interests of the whole community in Northern Ireland."

I suggest that the person who wrote that is extremely naive. What better professionalism, effectiveness and flexibility in terms of security can anyone show than to survive 24 hours a day, seven days a week, year in, year out, for the past 23 years in the face of determined terrorism with no rest and relaxation and no respite at home, at work in one's civilian job or on duty? That is what we face in Northern Ireland.

Unfortunately, serving officers are being marginalised because they cannot do the battle training course or the assault courses the way they could 23 years ago when they first joined the regiment. Very few of their duties require assault course soldiery. They have to be mentally alert and place themselves directly between the terrorists and the ordinary law-abiding community and carry out their duties without alienating the extremely sensitive community in Northern Ireland.

It is wrong to say that, to make the Royal Irish Regiment home battalions more professional, they have to become Royal Marines, paratroopers or Royal Anglians. They need the confidence to continue on a day-to-day basis to do what they have done effectively for the past 23 years.

If the Minister will take note of what I have said and will consider the desperate need to recruit able young men to lead the regiment as we need officers, he will be doing a service to the military in general, because the Royal Irish Regiment plays a very important part in the day-to-day security of Northern Ireland. He will also be doing a particular favour to the people of Northern Ireland, for which they I can assure him will be more than grateful.

7.37 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I am sure that the House listened with respect to the honourable and gallant Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis). I deliberately use that traditional form of address because he is an honourable and gallant Gentleman. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will have listened to his speech with respect and with careful attention because he spoke from the heart and with great knowledge and obviously he must be taken extremely seriously.

The hon. Gentleman ended his speech on a parochial note. I shall begin on one. The last time that we debated defence in the House, my county regiment, the Staffordshire Regiment, was under threat. I am delighted to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Secretary of State for Defence and to my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton) for at long last listening to the pleas which we made time and again from the moment when that ill-advised merger with the Cheshires was announced until finally my right hon. Friend came to the Dispatch Box and announced that the regiment was reprieved. It was most frustrating for me as I was off sick that day and could not respond. But I can do now and say how glad I am.

I have rarely been more moved or impressed than I was when I went in April with the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) to a special lunch put on by the Staffords to say thank you to those who had campaigned in Parliament and outside. One met there a group of young men who were remarkably dedicated. They were thorough professionals in the best sense of that word. I was not only thrilled that the Staffords had been reprieved, which was absolutely right and necessary, but I also saw those young men—officers and men—as the very epitome of British manhood.

There are few institutions in this country today that are regarded with unreserved pride and admiration. This place is not always held up for the admiration that it might be. There are very few in the professions who are regarded with unrelieved and unreserved pride. But I know very few people who have anything other than respect and admiration for our armed forces; for the professionalism and dedication with which they perform the most difficult of tasks, for the quiet, understated and restrained courage and bravery that they invariably display, which we have seen so graphically demonstrated in Bosnia in recent months. It is good to begin by paying that tribute.

I am sorry that my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell is not here. He explained to me that he had to leave and he knew that I would be referring to him. But it is a pity to approach any defence debate from the point of view of Treasury figures. The absolute overriding duty of any Government, regardless of its political complexion, is to secure the defence of the realm. Our armed forces are second to none.

My right hon. Friend referred to a reporter. It was Kate Adie. I was in the Committee Room when she talked about the bravery and professionalism of our British soldiers and said quite unashamedly that no one could hold a candle to them. If one accepts that we are singularly fortunate in having such brilliant armed forces, always the arm of civil power and never anything else, and if one accepts that it is the overriding duty of any Government to secure the defence of the realm and its interests, one cannot and must not begin with a figure and fit everything within that figure.

Of course I was as delighted as anyone in the House at the end of the cold war; at the demise of the monolithic communist bloc. But I am as aware as anyone in the House that those old monolithic dangerous certainties have been replaced by something perhaps even more dangerous. Already it has been referred to this afternoon. Where once the Soviet Union existed as a monolithic nuclear power, regimented and controlled, there are now four nuclear powers, not very well regimented and controlled.

The danger implicit in that for the fragile peace of the world, a danger compounded by the fact that, within the decade, we may well see Iran and Iraq as nuclear powers, should make anyone realise that it is essential not to be dictated to by figures when one comes to work out the defence budget and the defence of the realm.

The Conservative party has much to be proud of in the way in which it has sustained the defence of this realm. We have a great deal to be proud of in the leading role that we have enabled our country to play in NATO during the past 14 years and before. But we must recognise—this was referred to in an intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), who is Chairman

[Mr. Patrick Cormack]

of the Defence Select Committee—that Britain is a great power. It is a leading member of NATO. It is, after all, one of five permanent members of the Security Council. It is a member of the Group of Seven, the most important economic nations in the world. It has an important and pivotal role in the European Community.

Whichever way one looks at it, Britain is a great power and that brings with it responsibilities. I should like to make that the background of some remarks about a subject that has cropped up in every speech—the situation in the former Yugoslavia. I make no apology for raising that yet again. The House is a little fuller than it was at 3.30 am one cold December morning in 1991 when we first debated the situation in the former Yugoslavia. It was the first time that the House had discussed it.

To say "the House" is perhaps a slight exaggeration. I was here, as was my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The hon. Member who had the next debate on the Consolidated Fund was here, sleeping gently on a Back Bench somewhere. Mr. Deputy Speaker was in the Chair because Mr. Speaker Weatherill had had the good sense to go to bed. Someone was reporting from *Hansard* and I think that two people were asleep in the Public Gallery, and that was it.

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Lords Commissioner to the Treasury): And a Whip.

Mr. Cormack: And a Whip.

I make that point because I want to say that at that time I and a number of others were saying that if only a united and resolute show of forceful resistance to what was going on in Yugoslavia were made, the problems that were then occurring in Dubrovnik—it was then a Croatian problem—would probably have been brought to an end and there probably would not have been an outbreak in Bosnia. What was needed, of course, was not massive forceful intervention, but a naval and air blockade. If they had been instituted we might have avoided all the carnage and horror and all the rape and distress that has followed since.

We must recognise that what has happened in the former Yugoslavia during the past 18 months is an indictment of the western powers, and the European powers in particular. Yes, we triumphantly won the cold war. Yes, it was a stunning victory. But in the first real test in this new disordered order that replaced those old certainties to which I have referred, we have failed.

There is no point in rescuing our reputations merely by heaping much-deserved praise on the troops. Yes, our troops have discharged themselves with marvellous fortitude and bravery. I have already referred to that. That no one can gainsay. But it is no good a politician saying that that is wonderful and all is right, because it is not. There has been a lack of cohesion and a failure to respond. An uncertain message has been sent about the effectiveness of the United Nations and of the European Community in dealing with such a crisis. The message that that conveys to warlords in many countries and to those who might become warlords in many parts of the Soviet Union is fraught with dire danger for us all.

There are various things that we can and should do. On 25 May I tabled, with the support of several of my hon. Friends, early-day motion 2082, which refers to the background to our failure and to the Washington accord, which had just been signed. We said that we had no confidence in that agreement.

"because it recognises, and thus rewards, unprincipled and brutal aggression and offers neither adequate protection nor reasonable hope to the victims of the worst crimes against humanity since World War Two."

I commend that motion to right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House because it sets out the position fairly well and makes the point that, with each failure, the situation has become more difficult to deal with. Something that began as an act of Serbian regression and that was not a true civil war has degenerated into a civil war, with Muslim and Croat fighting each other.

I have never advocated and I do not advocate massive ground involvement and unnecessarily putting lives at risk. However, I may say in parenthesis that when one talks to young men in the Staffordshire and in other British Army regiments, they say some very sobering things. I asked one group what they would do if they were sent to Bosnia. They replied, "We joined up to serve, and if we are sent we will go. We only hope that we will not have one hand tied behind our back, like our mates in the Cheshires." One of them said, "Sometimes, you get killed—but if you didn't recognise that, you would not join the Army any more than a young man would join the police." It is not that they court disaster and danger, but they know that it is there. I regret the emotive talk about body bags and so on, but I have never advocated mass ground involvement.

What can be done now? We can make one last supreme effort to get the parties together, but we can only do that successfully if the Serbs in particular know—although this applies now to the Croats also to a degree—that we are prepared to take more punitive action than the mere imposition of sanctions. One tragedy of the situation has been the invalidation by ourselves of the doctrine of deterrent. For many years we taught that one deterred by having something that one was prepared to use. In the case of the Serbs, we signalled from the word go that we would not use force of any sort against them. We should have kept them guessing and we should have been resolute. Hence my advocacy from the beginning of an air and naval blockade.

I do not know whether we can rescue from that carnage and despair something identifiable as a nation. We recognised it as a sovereign nation and we still do—its president was with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs at the beginning of this week. Some 200,000 people, and perhaps as many as 250,000, have died, and 2·5 million have been displaced. The statistics are overwhelming in their grotesque horror.

We can and must draw a lesson from that appalling catastrophe—that the old philosophy of NATO does not apply in the new world order. We have talked of rapid reaction and deployment and of fire brigade-type operations and forces. We must develop a new strategy to deal with situations which are far short of the threat of a world war but which are perhaps the beginning of cancerous conflicts that can destroy a nation. It is essential that we establish a group of Ministers from each of the NATO countries who should meet over the next few months, charged with the job of working out a strategy for the new, disordered world order.

Britain has a remarkable contribution to make in that context, based on the brilliance of our armed forces, long traditions and ability to react. That tradition has never been and should not now be dictated to by Treasury figures. Of course, harsh decisions must be made on public expenditure—every right hon. and hon. Member recognises that—but the last thing to be cut should be that on which we all ultimately depend, which is the safety and security of the realm and its interests, which depend fundamentally on effective armed forces.

I was disturbed when I listened to my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster speak about the findings of his Select Committee, the length between tours that our troops are obliged to observe, and the young women in Cyprus who were left behind while their husbands went to the Falklands. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement is a man of sensitivity and imagination. I hope that he, too, was disturbed and will consider carefully the implications.

I hope also that my hon. Friend the Minister above all realises that real imagination and vision is called for in dealing with the problems that now beset us. I make no apology for giving my hon. Friend a boost and plug, because earlier this year he published one of the most remarkable, successful, well-written and brilliantly researched biographies of any living political figure. I refer to my hon. Friend's biography of Nixon. I read every word of it because I had to review it and I thought that it was excellent.

My hon. Friend the Minister analysed a man who, whatever his domestic and personal shortcomings, was in the international sense a colossus. We lack a colossus on the international stage at the moment. Perhaps my hon. Friend, through his important place in the Government and close proximity to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, will be able to play a part in fashioning just such another colossus because—by jove—we need leadership of that high order now in this dangerous world. If we are to supply it, or help to supply it from this country, we cannot do it with a defence budget that is so Treasury-dominated that real emergencies are neglected and real contingencies cannot be met.

7.58 pm

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): The hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) spoke with his usual sense and honesty in probing beyond NATO into a much more complex world. Such searching after the truth will pay dividends. The hon. Gentleman began by hailing his success in retaining his local regiment, and he is justly proud of its history and traditions. Such things simply cannot be bought, and the hon. Gentleman will sympathise with and understand the Scottish view of our regiments and their importance within Scottish culture and the Scottish way of life.

The cliche that we live in a rapidly changing world has now proved absolutely true. Cataclysmic events of historic significance have seemed to pile up over the past few years; only now have we an opportunity to stop and take stock of the significance of what has happened. The old, ultimate cold war opponent has disappeared, to be replaced by a multiplicity of potential trouble spots. Problems of an entirely different nature have arisen throughout the world. In that context, surely we need a new and fundamental review of defence requirements and configurations.

The old United Kingdom strategy, dominated by the cold war and nuclear weapons, must now be either justified or altered to meet changed circumstances. Is the Minister entirely satisfied with the current nuclear defence strategy, or does he admit that those changed circumstances now demand a root-and-branch review of our defence requirements? Let me again make a direct plea to the Government to scrap the plans for regimental amalgamation in Scotland: given the increased demand for conventional forces, it makes less and less sense to destroy Scotland's highly successful regiments by amalgamating them. I support the contention of Lt-Gen. Sir Peter Graham that the British Army is already overstretched with its current commitments, let alone any extra duties that may arise after the implementation of the proposed cuts.

This is very much an avoidable error. Sir Peter says:

"There is a need for more Infantry in the British Army. There is acute overstretch and the proof is that the interval between operations should be 24 months but it is actually down to 15 months! . . . We are facing heavy commitments within a world situation which has changed . . . If 47 battalions cannot cope, I cannot see how 40 battalions could cope!"

Sir Peter is a military strategist, and I am not; but even I can see that conventional forces are being required on an increasing scale throughout the world, for both peacekeeping and other duties. The Government's policy is to supply even more nuclear weapons which cannot be used, while at the same time dismantling infantry regiments that provide the only effective method of operation. That is a gross misuse of resources, and a major policy error.

The Government have never really answered the point about overstretching: I hope that they will do so this evening. Their first response to the outright opposition to regimental manpower cuts was to halt reductions at 119,000 men rather than 116,000, as originally planned. However, there has been no increase or addition in the strength of either men or infantry battalions; nor are any proposed. In fact, there has been a decrease only marginally less severe than those orginally scheduled in "Options for Change"—hence the problems of overstretch, stress and strain and grossly reduced intervals between duty tours. Those problems will continue, as will unnecessary family separations.

The price of those regimental cuts will be paid by the families of soldiers who will experience stress owing to the failure of Government policy. If finance is the Government's prime motivation, I should like to hear from them the extra costs and burdens that will be placed on individuals, local authorities and the local economies of the highlands and the north-east of Scotland. Will they do anything to help with new housing, employment and the retraining of the soldiers who would have preferred to remain in their chosen profession? At what cost will this take place, compared with the continuation of the battalions that are required by existing commitments?

Again, the price of the Government's policy will be paid by individuals, families and the local economy, which will be rocked by between 500 and 600 redundancies in an already depressed economic situation. I have not heard the Government deal with that. The highlands and the north-east of Scotland will pay a heavy price for unnecessary regimental cuts.

Let me remind the Minister that the planned amalgamations affect an area whose population is

[Mr. Andrew Welsh]

relatively small. One person in 3,000 joins the Army through the Queen's Own Highlanders each year: one in 19,000 does so in London. The impact of the redundancies, and the need for homes, will be disproportionate if the amalgamation goes ahead. I have never understood the logic of axing the Scottish regiments, which are popular and up to establishment—especially when, even in financial terms, recruitment is easier to achieve and retention levels are far higher.

I believe that the Government should play to the strengths of the Gordon Highlanders and the Queen's Own Scottish Highlanders, rather than destroy traditions and loyalties that have existed for centuries. Such things cannot be bought, and, once destroyed, they will be gone for ever.

In addition to all that, Scotland has another problem. Now, the economic and unemployment threat of the Rosyth closure hangs over the local population. Lord Younger of Prestwick has said:

"Before a final decision is taken, I feel I must remind all concerned of a matter of good faith which is involved here. I fought long and hard, first as Secretary of State for Scotland and then as Secretary of State for Defence, to persuade public opinion in Scotland to accept, however reluctantly, that Britain's base for the nuclear deterrent would be at Faslane on the Clyde.

One of the most powerful arguments which I deployed was that there would obviously be many jobs for Scotland associated with operating and maintaining the submarines. I know that many in Scotland would therefore feel badly let down if a major part of these jobs were now to be removed from Scotland.

I hope it will be understood that I would find it impossible to support such a move as my good faith would clearly be called into question."

If the Government close Rosyth, they will break their former colleague's word. They will leave Scotland with the worst of both worlds: a country that faced all the nuclear dangers will have lost any employment or economic benefits.

Mr. Mans: Earlier, the hon. Gentleman gave the impression that he favoured a transfer of defence resources from the nuclear deterrent to infantry battalions and conventional armaments. How does he reconcile that statement with his wish for Rosyth to be kept open to service nuclear submarines?

Mr. Welsh: I was quoting the words of Lord Younger, who was responsible for the policy. I am saying that, if there is to be a peace dividend and if it is to mean anything, Rosyth should be turned into a model of employment diversification and investment for the future. It appears that the Government have no such intention. I am saying that Scotland will get the worst of both worlds: we had the nuclear dangers, and it appears that, if this decision goes ahead, we shall lose the employment that such an installation would provide.

I am simply giving the Government a previous Minister's view. He believes that his honour is at stake. I hope the Government will listen to that view. I also hope that they will go beyond the nuclear issue, and ensure that there is real defence diversification and a real future for Rosyth. Closure of Rosyth would bring about economic devastation. I am very worried about the general trend in the Government's policy: they tend to close such installations, rather than maintaining a presence to allow change, employment and a future. Once they have gone, local economies are utterly devastated. The Government have employed that policy in many spheres; I consider it very short-sighted.

In December 1992, the Ministry of Defence issued a publication entitled "Information to Local Authorities and Emergency Services on Nuclear Weapons Transport Contingency Plans". The information was intended to help local authorities to plan for, and deal with, any accident involving nuclear weapon convoys. Ministry of Defence advice from that document is that people should be advised to shelter up to 5 km from the accident locus. According to Strathclyde region, it is simply not feasible to achieve that, given the methods available for informing the public. Similarly, MOD advice is that evacuation may be necessary up to 600 m. In heavily built-up areas that may pose extreme difficulties.

We are talking about a centre of Scottish population. There would be nowhere to hide if any such accident took place. The Public Information on Radiation Emergencies Regulations place a statutory duty on regional councils to provide information and advice to the public affected by a radiation emergency. I put it to the Minister that Strathclyde regional emergency and planning officer is so concerned about the implications of the MOD guidance that he has advised that he could not effectively carry out the advice or plan for the safety of the public in the event of an accident involving the transport of nuclear weapons. He asks that hazardous convoys be either removed or made safe. I should like the Minister to address this problem, because we are talking about the central belt of Scotland and the bulk of the Scottish population.

In transporting nuclear weapons through heavily populated areas of central Scotland, what guarantees can the Government give on the safety of the civilian population? Are they aware of the alarm felt, not just in Strathclyde but by other local government planning officers, about the impossibility of dealing with a real emergency? If local government officials cannot provide safe conditions or emergency help for their civilian populations, the Government must stop the dangers from arising. I remind the Minister that I am talking about officials without any specific political input. It is their duty to carry out such measures, but they cannot do so.

What steps is the Minister taking now to eliminate the dangers? His need to transport nuclear weapons is placing at risk the population of the central belt of Scotland. Before the end of the debate, will he make clear the response that he is making to Strathclyde and the other Scottish regions involved? Will he stop all such nuclear weapons transportation until it can be clearly and publicly demonstrated that the safety of the public is not compromised by convoy movements?

That is another illustration of Scotland facing the dangers of radiation, but not many of the benefits. *[Interruption.]* The reaction of the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) explains why the Conservative party is being thrown out of Scotland. Our population has to live with those dangers and does not wish to do so. If the Conservative party listened to the Scottish population, this problem and the others associated with it would not exist. *[Interruption.]* The fact that the hon. Gentleman is not getting to his feet is symptomatic of why the Conservatives are being rejected by the Scottish people.

Mr. Brazier: The hon. Gentleman may be aware that, under the present distribution of regional aid, his country receives approximately 30 per cent. of the grants, although it has just under 9 per cent. of the unemployment. Talk about special pleading.

Mr. Welsh: The hon. Gentleman is on dangerous ground. The bulk of defence spending is in the south of England. Scotland has the gunnery ranges and other such facilities, but the real Government money and the real employment is in the south-east of England. The hon. Gentleman should not talk about subsidies. He has only to walk less than a mile from the House to London docklands to find out what subsidies really mean. I will not take such talk from the hon. Gentleman. His blinkered attitude towards Scotland is the reason why his party is being rejected by the Scottish people.

I know that other hon. Members wish to participate in the debate. There is a need for a fundamental review of United Kingdom defence policy to meet the changed circumstances and the needs of the late 1990s. My plea to the Minister is for the maintenance of Scottish regimental recruitment, the safety of the Scottish civilian population and the maintenance of employment in Scotland as the peace dividend allows new and unprecedented options for real change.

8.14 pm

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): I sympathise with the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) in his plea for the Gordon Highlanders and the Queen's Own Highlanders. I pay tribute to them, having served with both during my time in the forces. They are examples of Scottish regiments that have given long, proud and loyal service to the Crown of the United Kingdom.

To take up a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), I remind the House of the old adage that the first duty of the Government is the defence of the realm. I pay tribute to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. He is doing a difficult job in difficult times. I pay particular tribute to his steady handling of the Bosnian situation. We hear many calls for intervention, such as "taking out the Serbian artillery", as if it could be done in a neat surgical operation with a scalpel. However, anyone who knows anything about high explosive knows that its use is not a neat operation. It spreads its destruction all around. That is a reflection of the ignorance of defence that one finds in the House. That ignorance surprises me, having had a career in the Army. It is exemplified by those who call for intervention while, at the same time, calling for further cuts in defence expenditure.

That ignorance of defence is paralleled in the country. That is not surprising as it is nearly 50 years since the end of the second world war and 30 years since the end of national service. I should like to see the House raise the standard of debate and have a proper public debate about defence.

"Options for Change" radically reduced the armed forces in pursuit of what we call the peace dividend. We have had the dividend in terms of saving, but there has been a conspicuous lack of peace. Since the launch of "Options for Change", we have had the Gulf war, Bosnia and Somalia—another example of the "surgical" use of air power was seen there last night—and there have been many other United Nations operations.

Since the announcement of the planned reduction in the armed forces, we have been faced with an increasing number of potential tasks and commitments. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) said, with hindsight we can see that 1989 was the wrong time to review what was going on. We had seen the collapse of the Warsaw pact and the Soviet empire, but we had yet to see the breakdown of the Soviet Union. The world is now becoming much less stable and this is not the time to reduce our defences. Many have seen parallels with the 1930s in the instability in central Europe and in the difficult economic situation. Some time ago, I heard "Options for Change" defined within the Ministry of Defence as an "internal defence review". I must tell my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench that we must look again at all the assumptions behind it.

Last weekend, I went to the Queen's birthday parade —trooping the colour—where the second battalion of my old regiment was, sadly, trooping its colour for the last time before marching off into the sunset. It was a sad occasion. I will not make any special pleading for my old regiment. The decision to reduce the number of Guards battalions may or may not be correct. However, it was sad to see that that set-piece affair had only six Guards battalions instead of the eight that it had last year and in the year when I took part. Some people say that they are just ceremonial troops. That is nonsense. While the second battalion of Coldstream Guards marched into the sunset, the first battalion was being warned off for service in Bosnia. I have seen those troops serve in the Gulf and Northern Ireland.

I am not saying that the decision to reduce troops is wrong, but it does typify the situation. In that Guards battalion, as elsewhere, morale is inevitably very low, for many reasons, but particularly because of uncertainty. There has been a huge take-up of redundancy packages, even in a recession when jobs are difficult to find. We have not had great success in recruiting officers. The armed forces has always been a respected profession, but we cannot now recruit officers even in a recession.

I know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will say that his Ministry of Defence advisers tell him that all is well, and that we are experiencing a little local difficulty. I am reminded of the divorce between staff officers and troops on the ground, as appeared to happen in the first world war. We are not in such a war, but there is nevertheless a divorce between the thinking of the Ministry of Defence and many of those in the front line.

I shall expand a little on the standing of the armed forces, a topic to which my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South also referred. Although we may not all have read it, the police sent us a survey on the standing of the police in the eyes of the public. The police received a rating of about 60 or 65 per cent., a rating of which they are justly proud. The survey also showed that the standing of the armed forces—the approval rating, or whatever one wishes to call it—was about 87 per cent. I wish that the House had an approval rating of 87 per cent. The armed forces are an admired and respected part of British society. They are an admired and respected institution whereas other British institutions have, frankly, fallen on hard times.

What will happen to the armed forces if good-calibre recruits are not attracted to become officers or join the other ranks? Their standing will fall and performance will

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decline. Morale is already at rock bottom and in need of attention, and things will continue to get worse. What type of armed forces do we want in the future? Do we want high-calibre, professional armed forces? If so, we need to raise the level of debate and put the subject into the public domain.

I assure the House that I am not a radical, although I may sometimes look like one with my long hair, but I believe that we need an appraisal. I do not want radical change, but we must not allow a valued national asset to be lost by default. That valued national asset is definitely under threat.

In a changing world, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State is moving to consider defence as part of security. I approve because security is no longer a question of NATO versus the Warsaw pact. We need to consider the totality of security: defence against terrorism—some of it state backed—and security in foreign policy. Of course,

"war is a continuation of diplomacy by other means."

Security policy should, therefore, be wider ranging than it has ever been. We need to consider the defence of the nation and of the national interest in that context. For those reasons, we must reconsider our strategic needs.

I fear that there will be further cuts in our armed forces by stealth. At the beginning of April, there was a reduction of 5,000 out of a total of 55,000 in the Navy. A 10 per cent. cut in the Royal Navy without proper debate is extremely disappointing. Last week, further cuts in the Royal Air Force were annouced, and today there has been talk of a reduction in the Royal Naval Reserve and the Royal Auxiliary Air Force. However one presents them, they are cuts in the armed forces, and we cannot ignore that. Our defences are deteriorating by stealth. We need an open, public debate.

I hope that the Minister will be able to answer several questions. Will future units be smaller but better, as we were promised in "Options for Change"? I hope that the Minister will asure me that, in the coming years, all units will be fully manned and up to strength. What are the implications for defence expenditure of the long-term costings for 1993 and the projected long-term costings for 1994? What are the implications of the current review of public expenditure? What will the public expenditure survey round bring? What effect will Treasury pressure have on the Ministry of Defence?

I deal now with the much vaunted Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps. Can we man it? Some people suggest rather glibly that it will be an arm of the Western European Union, but the WEU is an organisation without a command structure, control or communications, direction or intelligence. NATO has served this nation, western Europe and the world extremely well. For good or ill, the United States provides an enormous part of the command, control and communications network which runs NATO. I have visited most NATO headquarters in Europe, and I can assure the House that that is the case. The United States provides strategic lift. If we move to the WEU, will we provide the strategic lift. and from where will we get command, control and communications? My hon. Friends may disagree, but I suspect that the ARRC may be little more than a political statement, perhaps allied to the aspirations of some European politicians and some of our partners. It would be a tragedy if the ARRC were to become nothing more than words which can never be employed. There is little flexibility in it as currently constituted.

As I said, we should have a full, public appraisal of our strategic needs. The Army is overstretched because there is a mismatch of resources and commitments. We currently have 12 battalions in Northern Ireland. They are usually infantry but, following "Options for Change", we shall have only 42 infantry battalions and commandos, minus the Gurkhas, available for service in Northern Ireland. Maths was never my strong point, but I envisage some difficulty in managing 24-month tour intervals with 42 battalions. A 24-month tour interval looks increasingly unlikely.

My right hon. and learned Friend mentioned the reserve forces, but he should not regard them as an easy and cheap option. He spoke of professionalism and training. I welcome the further involvement of our excellent reserves in active duties, which can be offered to them as an incentive for their hard work. However, reserve forces are being cut. We won both world wars with our reserve forces and Territorial Army; they were not won by our regular forces. The British expeditionary force and the regular forces were slaughtered in the first world war and we then had to rely on our reserves, but they are now being cut. In these difficult times, it is essential that we do not cut them further.

My hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin) noted how cheap reserves are, but they should not be regarded as a cheap option in peacetime. I agree that they cost much less than fully trained, pensioned soldiers, but if we want a professional Army and highly trained troops, we have to have professionals who are highly trained. That takes time; it cannot be done in a couple of weekends a year. I in no way want to criticise the reserve forces, because they are excellent, but they are not the solution to all our problems.

I heard that units would be half-manned by reserve forces. I have to say that that means that they will be undermanned. It is not a realistic option in which we should take pride. The reserves are not full-time personnel. Of course, some are on the dole and might welcome employment, but most of them are not. It would be disappointing if the Government wished to employ people without pension rights. They are not trained to the same standards, and it is futile to pretend that they are. If we want a reservist army, as some of our neighbours have, let us say so. We should look again at the whole question of our reserves and, for that reason, we should have a sensible, open and public appraisal of our requirements.

I believe that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has the interests of the country and its defence close to his heart, but I would consider it tragic if such an able and committed Secretary of State were to oversee further deterioration in the state of our armed forces.

There has been a paucity of suggestions from the Opposition, but if we had an open debate it would allow more suggestions to be made at a more sensible, raised level. We do not want a debate at a financial level; we want to discuss the country's defence needs. What is essential for our defence? What sort of armed forces do we want in the long term?

Currently, there are threats all over the globe—it is not a safe world. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State said earlier that we have just seen the

most radical change in the armed forces since the 1940s, yet we have done so without looking properly at our commitments and resources. We are seeing not so much salami slicing as butchery behind closed doors.

Ignorance extends to the general public, who expect the armed forces always to rise to the occasion, such as in the Falklands and the Gulf. We need to educate the public about what we can and cannot do. We cannot march into Bosnia with all flags flying and expect to be taken seriously. I remind the House of Kipling's "Tommy":

"Oh, It's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' 'Tommy, go away'; But it's 'Thank you, Mister Atkins,' when the band begins to play."

We always turn to the armed forces in time of need. We hope that they will be there in future because the country will not forgive the House if the armed forces, including the reserve forces, are not able to rise to our need when the country is threatened.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) was absolutely correct to say that a strategic review is not the solution. However, at least after such a review we would understand the problems. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to arrange a proper strategic review of the defence of the nation. Only then will we understand and solve the very real problems facing our armed forces today.

8.32 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): I have listened to most of the debate, apart from essential visits out of the House, and was particularly interested in the last two speeches. I was interested to hear the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) saying that he did not think that the standard of defence debates was all that high and that there is some ignorance about defence issues. He joined the Secretary of State for Defence in criticising Opposition Members for what he alleged to be a lack of interest or of useful suggestions.

I certainly hope to put forward some ideas. Labour Members take a strong interest in defence, but Conservative Members sometimes misunderstand our interest. I hope that they will not take it unkindly when I say that perhaps they confuse their own interests in defence. From my experience of the armed forces, I know that they can certainly be said to represent the officer class, whereas for obvious reasons we tend to represent the other ranks. That is the nature of the way in which the Army is recruited—a point that was made by the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) in relation to the Gordon Highlanders.

There is a relationship between levels of unemployment and deprivation and recruitment into the armed forces. It is partly tradition, but partly the lack of alternative jobs. In areas of high recruitment there is a lack of alternative jobs, so naturally we take an interest in the people who are recruited into the armed forces because we want to ensure that they are used properly. I hope that Conservative Members will not take that remark unkindly.

I refer to the clash between some of the claims that are made in the defence estimates and the realities as they have emerged in the past month during the saga, fiasco or foul-up at RAF St. Athan over the modification contract for F3 Tornadoes, which has reached the media following the termination of the Ministry of Defence contract to refit the 18 aircraft. My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) referred to this and I wish to point out what conclusions the Ministry of Defence should draw from the way in which the exercise has gone wrong and how it conflicts with the claims that are made in Cm 1981.

Paragraph 322 of the estimates says:

"Contractorisation of support services continues to achieve savings in the RAF support area."

Paragraph 313 refers to the aim of "total quality" in the merger of the Defence Research Agency with the directorate of quality assurance, which has also played a major part in this saga, as I hope to show shortly. It refers to the fact that the Government have appointed Mr. Littmoden, formerly of Marks and Spencer, as head of the merged agency to try to achieve higher standards of quality.

I am a great admirer of some of the work of Marks and Spencer in raising the efficiency of its textile suppliers. It was always said in management that only two bodies take a hands-on interest in trying to improve the efficiency of their suppliers—the Ministry of Defence and Marks and Spencer. They often compared notes and told suppliers, "You could be producing these goods at half the price if only you bought better machinery and did it this way. These are the places where you should be buying that better machinery. These are the people who you need to run it, and you could produce the same goods for us at half the price, make a bigger profit and we would both be better off. We will show you how to do it." Marks and Spencer went further and took shares in supplier companies. The Ministry of Defence obviously could not do that, but they were the only bodies that injected a drive to improve the efficiency of their own suppliers through a proper, active, hands-on quality assurance directorate.

That was some 20 years ago when I was in the civil service, at which time I had interesting conversations with Ministry of Defence civil servants. The position seems to have deteriorated a great deal since because of the almost theological belief that the market will now do the job that active, hands-on, backside-kicking, engineering and value analysis expertise within the Ministry of Defence used to do. There is now total reliance on the market.

That was referred to by the Public Accounts Committee in its report, the first page of which says:

"We note that the Department generally rely on market forces to achieve value for money at the contract re-let stage and that they rarely prepare an in-house option to compare against bids from firms. We stress that this places a premium on maintaining effective competition between potential contractors, especially as the in-house staff who previously provided the service will often no longer be in post."

Fortunately, the RAF St. Athan and Airworks Services saga had not gone that far. As a result, in-house staff who were not allowed to bid for the modification contract for F3 Tornadoes have already started some remedial work on the two mildly damaged Tornado F3s of the 18 that were referred to by the shadow Secretary of State. Thank God they are still in post and have not been dispensed with in favour of putting everything out to compulsory competitive tendering, contractorisation, privatisation or some other variant of the Government's theology-driven alternatives to in-house capacity for carrying out improvements, modifications or life extensions to key equipment such as very expensive aircraft, which at the equivalent price today would cost £25 million each.

What happened at RAF St. Athan? When the Department decided to have a life extension exercise for the F3 Tornadoes, because of the amount of service that they had seen, to see whether their effective flying life could

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be doubled—that was a sensible idea—the initial contract was given to British Aerospace. Again, the RAF was not allowed to bid. The contract appears to have been completed successfully on the first 15 aircraft. But British Aerospace lost the contract for the next batch to Airwork Services from Bournemouth.

The RAF still had not been allowed to bid, although I understand that it did a ghost bidding exercise, just to test, and that its estimate came out about halfway between the rather high British Aerospace price and the low Airwork Services price, which has now turned out to be such a bad bargain—although litigation may remedy that. For obvious reasons, I shall not go into that possibility tonight, although the Minister may want to say something about it later.

The Government had gone in for a low-cost option and it appears that in the specifications for the contract there was almost no check on how Airwork Services, or any other lowest bidder, would carry out the contract. The contract had been given to the lowest bidder, with all the attendant dangers that that firm might neglect aspects such as supervision, craftsmanship and a quality assurance trail. Would there be any longstop to ensure that the aircraft were modified to the proper standard, without collateral damage being done in the course of the work? No, there was no quality assurance trail at all.

RAF St. Athan sent warning signs to the Ministry of Defence quality assurance directorate, which was told, "It looks to us as though something is going wrong on the contract." Having been notified, the quality assurance directorate staff went to RAF St. Athan and asked to look at the firm's quality assurance certificate, the ISO 9001—the international equivalent of the BS 5750 quality systems certificate. That certificate is proliferating like a plague throughout British industry; people refer to it as, "never mind the quality, feel the certificate". I do not think that I am being unfair; I am reflecting an opinion that is widespread throughout industry, including the service industries, about those certificates, which have little meaning.

The Ministry of Defence said, "If the firm has a certificate, we do not want to look at the aeroplanes. Has it got a valid ISO 9001? If the answer is yes, we do not want to look at the planes." The MOD staff went back to London satisfied that the certificate was in order. They did not look at the aeroplanes, so they did not see the damage being done by the inappropriate trade practices and inappropriate tools until four of the aircraft had returned to their operational bases at RAF Leuchars, RAF Leeming or RAF Coningsby. I am not sure exactly which bases were involved, but they were among the three bases where F3 Tornadoes are normally used.

The damage was not discovered until four aircraft had gone back, which means that by the time it was discovered the aeroplanes could have been used operationally, in training exercises over the Lake District or mid Wales, at 50 ft off the ground. I am told that, as the fasteners had not been properly refastened and so were loose, two things could have happened. First, a fastener could have worked completely loose and because damage had been caused around the engine intake area, a loose fastener could have been sucked into the engine and sheared off the blades of the turbine from the shaft, which would have resulted in catastrophic engine failure. Secondly, as there were a lot of loose fasteners around the engine intake area, the engine itself could have sheared off. The lives of the air crew and of civilians unfortunate enough to live in the area over which Tornadoes usually perform low-level training, and also the lives of livestock such as sheep, could have been threatened in those two ways.

I find that frightening, especially as it was an avoidable risk. As the hon. Member for Blaby and many other hon. Members have said, there are unavoidable risks in operating a defence establishment. People do not join the armed forces because they think it will be all ENSA theatre parties and so on. They realise the risks of getting killed. But one does not expect people, including civilians, to be killed because of inefficiency or incompetence, especially when warnings have been given halfway through the saga but ignored because of an obsession with dodgy quality certificates that were not worth the paper they were written on.

Eighteen aircraft have now been damaged. Four of them, which are at RAF Leuchars, RAF Leeming or RAF Coningsby, have been cleared to limp back to RAF St. Athan, rather like a squadron of Lancasters that hit heavy flak over Hamburg in November 1944 and just made it back to Britain. The Tornadoes can just make it back to RAF St. Athan. However, 12 of the aircraft at RAF St. Athan have been classified as "seriously damaged". Those words are from the Ministry of Defence official statement on the affair. Two have been classified as superficially damaged and those two will now be rectified by RAF St. Athan in-house staff. They are mostly civilian staff, but I believe that about 120 service craftsmen have been transferred from their duties back to RAF St. Athan to assist the staff there in the remedial works on the two aircraft that are mildly damaged.

The 12 other aircraft are so seriously damaged that I understand that they have not yet been cleared to be towed on the ground from the modification hangar into the storage hangar to be taken out of the way and left free for examination purposes so that other works can proceed. They are not safe to tow along the ground in case further damage occurs to the structure of the aircraft, the engine intake areas and the longerons—the lengthways engineering members of the aircraft around which it is constructed.

We understand that damage was caused by the classic type of corner-cutting that occurs when a contractor is under pressure to complete a contract taken on at a low price and he knows that there is no active quality assurances specified in that contract, because it is totally reliant on certificates of quality systems and no one will come along and say, "Never mind about the certificate. Are you doing the job properly?" The contract was totally reliant on the idea that since the contractor had the certificate he must be doing the job properly. However, if a contractor bids very low in order to get the work, under the pressure of competitive tendering, he is likely to skimp on supervision and on the quality assurance trail. Unfortunately, that is what has happened since the Ministry of Defence deliberately omitted, or forgot, to provide an effective quality assurance check of its own, despite the risks to air crew and civilians which could result from faulty work.

I understand that the faulty work arose from the use of power tools that were far too powerful in an attempt to dismantle the aircraft so as to get at the insides. Pneumatic guns were used to remove the fasteners that attach the side

skins to the longerons and that created enlarged holes. When the fasteners were put back in there could not be a tight fit between the side skins and the longerons and that compromised the aeronautical integrity of the aircraft. An aircraft with loosely attached screws holding the sides on is not fit to do what an F3 Tornado is meant to do in combat—or in training, for that matter.

That is the alarming situation in which we now find ourselves. What can happen now? We have been talking about options for change, but what we now have is options for repairs at RAF St. Athan. We are told that three options are now being considered. The first is cannibalisation. We could use the F2 Tornadoes that are in storage because they have completed most of their natural flying life. Fortunately, their central fuselage section is almost identical to that of the F3, so the section of the F3 that has been damaged in the attempt to double its flying life could be ripped out and a cannibalised central fuselage section from an F2 in storage could be put in. That is cannibalisation. This would be done by the RAF Abingdon team, the so-called repair and recovery—commonly known as the crash and smash—team, which has moved down to RAF St. Athan.

Then there is reconstruction. This is probably the most expensive option and the one that, for obvious reasons, the German engineers who built the centre fuselage section of the Tornado F3 would prefer, because it would mean money for them. It would mean taking the aircraft or flying the centre fuselage section back to Germany and rebuilding it from scratch on the manufacturer's original jigs. Deutche Aerospace has recommended that that is what is necessary if the aircraft are ever to be restored to full fitness. Obviously, that is a very expensive way of going about it, but they say that that is the only way. One can say that the Mandy Rice-Davies rule applies here—well, they would, wouldn't they?—but they may be right; we do not know.

The third option is rectification, asking the skilled civilians and service men at RAF St. Athan to do the work. There are about 1,000 civilians, mostly skilled tradesmen and supervising technicians, and 3,000 service men of the same skilled type. It is not an operational RAF base; it is the RAF garage, as it were. They could be asked what they could do about the damage, which is that the depressions around fastener holes have been enlarged so that they are 25 times as great as the maximum tolerance allowed in the design of the Tornado F3. Maximum tolerance for damage round the screw holes is 0·02 mil, and the actual damage on these 12 aircraft, I understand, is 0·5 mil. The RAF could ask if there was a way of doing the job on the cheap, even if it took a long time.

We face other concerns as well, in that Airwork's own future may depend on certain matters on which the Minister may touch. It is not the purpose of this debate to throw accusations at the staff of Airwork, some of whom may be constituents of mine. Throwing terms such as cowboys at either staff or companies is of no interest to me. We are talking about policy decisions here tonight.

Is there a lesson here for the Ministry of Defence? I believe that there is and it falls into several categories. The first is how one judges whether a firm is the right sort to take on this kind of work. What sort of professional indemnity assurance against the contract getting into trouble do they have? If it gets to the stage of litigation against Airwork, do they have adequate insurance to cope with a bill for the writing off of two Tornadoes, costing £25 million when new, although they are certainly not new? Should one specify that a firm must be of sufficient financial standing or have sufficient indemnity insurance to cover that kind of damage? One has to be sure about that before giving a firm that kind of contract.

Can we also learn lessons as to how these contracts should be written? What sort of specification should be put in the contract in terms of quality assurance? One lesson is that we must not allow the further proliferation of, and over-dependence on, quality certificates, which tell very little about the quality of the job being done. Even though some consultant has given a quality certificate, hands-on quality assurance on the job is necessary to check that it is being done properly.

The greatest lesson is that it is silly not to allow the RAF to bid for that kind of work. I hope that that lesson gets home to the Minister. When all the decisions have been made about what kind of repairs to do, whether there will be litigation and, if there is litigation, whether it will get back the money that seems to have been lost over this, the most important lesson seems to be that common sense has gone out of the window in not allowing the RAF to bid against British Aerospace and Airwork.

In the whole thrust towards market testing, compulsory competitive tendering, privatisation and contractorisation, this was a market testing or contractorisation exercise that went one bridge too far. I hope that the Ministry of Defence has learnt its lesson from this fiasco.

8.55 pm

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) will forgive me if I do not follow him down that rather specialist road.

This debate takes place against the background of a considerable fiscal difficulty that has figured a number of times. Nevertheless, I shall follow earlier speakers in arguing for the matching of capabilities and resources.

I start by referring to a comment from a speech which my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) made in winding up the last debate on defence. He described in a very picturesque fashion visiting sites from which the Russian army had disappeared, and seeing great hangars for equipment that had been either demolished or taken away.

It is very easy to draw the wrong lesson from this. As far as I know, no serious military analyst believes that the forces of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation were capable of fighting a conventional battle against the forces of the Warsaw pact for more than a day or two. Our conventional forces provided a trigger for the policy of flexible response, which involved at a very early stage the use of tactical nuclear weapons. Even an enormous reduction in forces on the other side of the iron curtain would have left vastly greater forces than the NATO forces could have afforded a war against.

It is in the light of that observation that we have to look at the political situation now on the other side of what used to be the iron curtain, where we see, not one nuclear country but four; where we see a series of instabilities, some of which are getting worse.

I do not know whether it is true that Ukrainians are selling nuclear technology or whether it is true that Khazakistan is passing on nuclear technology to Iran, but we know that the spread of nuclear technology into the third world is a serious problem.

[Mr. Julian Brazier]

If we look at the "Options for Change" exercise and, for a second, imagine that it is a properly balanced one—I do not want to argue either way now—we realise that since then three things have changed on the threat side. First, the Soviet Union has broken up, so now there are four countries with nuclear weapons.

Secondly, another seven countries are on their way to becoming nuclear powers. Some of them are as close as north Africa and the middle east, and include Libya, Algeria and Syria. Those countries are not on the other side of the world. They are run by unstable dictators and will not necessarily respond easily to simple deterrence. They have not only nuclear weapons—they have built up chemical inventories and are developing biological weapons. Some also have enormous conventional forces. For example, Syria has more tanks than Britain and France put together. I mention those countries simply because we must not lose sight of the fact that they are close to home.

Thirdly, the commitments of the United Nations have grown. Ironically, this is the one that matters least from the point of view of the home base and the possible threat to the United Kingdom or our partners in western Europe. It is taking up most of our attention and a great deal of planning time of NATO and, indeed, the Ministry of Defence.

Since the options exercise, the problems have grown substantially. Resources have had one more round of cuts, and many of us are afraid that there will be another. I do not want to dwell on percentage reductions, because one can play all sorts of games against them—it depends on what one thinks they should be.

It is clear that the beans do not add up at present, and I shall give two succinct examples to show what I mean. The first is the rapid reaction corps. Its most important and most expensive training facility is at Suffield in Canada, where they practise combined training. The first three exercises this year turned into fiascos, because they were all done without infantry. We cannot talk about a rapid reaction corps: it cannot rapidly react if its troops are away doing other things, so they are not training for the role.

The other example is our amphibious forces. There is a case for having a strong amphibious capability. There is a case for saying that we, as a small country, cannot afford the capability to do such things. It is manifestly absurd to have the 80:20 ruling reversed and have all the overheads associated with the Royal Marines and the commando training facilities—I understand that there are six generals. It is absurd to invest in a helicopter carrier that will have no capability at all. Without the two landing platform docks are the centre of any possible amphibious action, but which are completely clapped out at present. One of them is so clapped out that it would take the best part of a year to get it back into some sort of order.

We are finding all sorts of small problems. Cuts have been made to the money available for war stocks, which are already at an extremely low level. For example, in the Gulf, we exhausted our entire reserve of shells in a short time. The real problem is not peacetime overstretch, although it is a serious problem and I do not underestimate it. When I was canvassing on our married quarters patch during the local elections, I met a number of wives of senior NCOs who are leaving the Army shortly, having taken voluntary redundancy.

That is not the biggest problem. The biggest problem is the overstretch in capabilities. We are trying to maintain the capabilities to fight potential high-intensity wars against some of the serious threats on the one hand and resources on the other.

I follow other hon. Members on both sides of the House in saying that we need a genuine strategic review of defence policy and diplomatic policy. My simple question is: what alliance would tackle a nuclear threat in north Africa? Would it be tackled by some hastily cobbled together ad hoc combination? No rapid forces other than those of NATO have the capability at present. But under its charter, NATO is not allowed to tackle it. We need a strategic review. I know that other hon. Members want to speak, so I will not pursue that matter.

The changes to the reserves are welcomed in principle. For many years, many of us in the Territorial Army have said that reserve forces should be used in peacetime. However, there is a right way and a wrong way of doing it. If it simply means that regular units that need to be all regular will be padded out by volunteers, some of whom are simply unemployed, that is not a proper use for them, and they will not help the territorials in the long term.

The Canadians, who do a lot of this, have a Territorial Army that is in extremely poor shape. Its level of recruiting is worse than ours and its turnover is as great. The right model is the one used by the United States national guard and the Australians. Both of them have a much lower turnover than we do.

I shall make four specific points. First, roles for Territorial Army units must be sensible, not half-baked. It is absurd, for example, that a recce regiment in the rapid reaction corps is Territorial Army. Of course, such a regiment could not be there quickly enough—it would have to go first.

Secondly, all units must have the same liability. The situation into which we have slipped with some high liability soldiers and some with lower liability is absurd. The paper that has been produced suggests that we should go further, but that is unworkable. It will simply create a sea of paperwork and will mean that the command structure in Territorial Army units will be bypassed.

Thirdly, units must be kept at a reasonable size. There is no earthly point in having mini, three-company battalions, with no support weapons—nothing. It would be far better to have fewer TA battalions embracing the existing number of companies so that each unit is a worthwhile size.

Fourthly, the arrangements for call-out are critical. As I said in my intervention in the Secretary of State's speech, if one lesson is clear from the Gulf it is that if we need a substantial number of TA soldiers, it is unfair to ask them to volunteer a second time. The call-out must be done as the Americans do it, which is to call out a unit. It saves individuals problems with their employers. It is understood in countries where it is used. Nevertheless, I see the possibility of progress in his statement.

I end where I began. Yes, we have economic difficulties but, my God, we also have political difficulties abroad. There is, indeed, a frightening similarity with what happened in the 1920s. Then there was no serious threat visible, but there was a huge amount of political and nationalist instability. The difference between now and

then is the nuclear element in the cocktail. We must not make the mistake of disarming too quickly and without a properly planned strategic review.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. In the 15 minutes available before the Front-Bench replies, two hon. Members hope to catch my eye. I sincerely hope that both are successful. I call Mr. Andrew Mackinlay.

9.5 pm

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): I take your point, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

First, I associate myself with the tributes paid by hon. Members to the men and women of our armed forces. I include in that reference the high regard that we all have for the parents of the soldier whose inquest was held at Wrexham earlier this week, who spoke proudly about their son and his service. We would want to associate ourselves with some tribute to him and to their courage and dignity.

I wish to raise one relatively small matter in the Statement on the Defence Estimates. It is a pity that annex A, which sets out the details of the fleet, does not include ships which are used exclusively for harbour training. If it did, I could refer to HMS Caroline, which is the last surviving ship that served in the battle of Jutland. It is languishing in a remote corner of Belfast dock, when the nation should be reinstating it with pride because it is part of our maritime and national history. I hope that the Secretary of State will tell us that it will be restored.

There is an omission from the estimates. The Government are still not doing enough for ex-service men and their widows and orphans. One of the first things I did on being elected to the House just over a year ago was to table early-day motion 2 which has attracted 70 signatures. It calls for the appointment of a Minister for war veterans and their widows and orphans. I regret that only one Conservative Member has signed it, although service men and women and veterans support the idea of a dedicated Minister to look after ex-service men, veterans and their widows and orphans.

Such an appointment would be welcome in view of the conflicts that, unfortunately, our armed forces still have to face around the world and in Northern Ireland, with consequential casualties. Moreover, our parents' generation—those who fought at Dunkirk, in north Africa and the far east—are, in the nature of things, getting elderly and frail. It would be a good signal if there were a Minister charged with promoting and protecting their interests and working with the various voluntary organisations which, incidentally, also support the appointment of such a Minister. I am thinking in particular of the Royal British Legion. Most countries have a veterans Minister. I hope that will be taken on board by the Minister.

There is reference in the documents to the Ministry of Defence police. I am pleased to have touched base with the Ministry of Defence Police Federation, the members of which do gallant service in protecting military establishments, pursuing crime and reassuring members of the public, service men and their families who operate at Ministry of Defence establishments.

That federation is anxious on two counts. The first is the growth in the number of civil static guards who do not have constabulary powers. Not only does the federation see the use of those guards as a diminution of its members' role as police officers, but fear that it is a form of short-termism for which we shall pay dearly in years to come, particularly in terms of diminished security.

Secondly, the federation is concerned lest the changed demands on members of the royal military police following the decline of BAOR will act as a temptation for the Secretary of State to use them in lieu of Ministry of Defence police, although their functions are different, particularly in the United Kingdom.

The Ministry of Defence police deal with civilians and service personnel in relation to crime and other traditional police duties. The royal military police, certainly in this country, have powers to deal only with military personnel. I hope we may be assured that, even by slippage, there will not be a shift to using the royal military police in lieu of the Ministry of Defence police.

I intervened earlier in the debate to refer to HMS Fort Victoria. I raise the issue again because a scandal surrounding the building of that vessel has not been properly aired. That armed support ship was ordered in 1986 at a contract price of £127 million. It was to be constructed at Harland and Wolff in Belfast. Its cost has escalated out of control, to approximately £190 million, and its delivery is three years behind schedule. It is time for the House to be given a full explanation of what has gone wrong and who is to blame.

I mention it as one who is interested and proud of our naval and auxiliary fleet, as an hon. Member who is concerned with public expenditure and, unashamedly, as an Opposition Member. Had Labour been in power, Conservative Members would be going bananas at this scandal of delay and overspending. I hope that there will be full disclosure of what has gone wrong because the Government have presided over considerable waste in respect of HMS Fort Victoria. The vessel has not been equipped as was originally intended and Parliament and the public should be told why there has been a failure to deliver the craft in the way originally intended.

9.13 pm

Mr. Richard Spring (Bury St. Edmunds): There is probably no part of the United Kingdom where the impact of the second world war lingers on more than in my constituency. Thousands of American service men arrived in Suffolk in 1942. Their stay then continues to be acknowledged throughout my constituency. Remembrance day is a joint Anglo-American service, and in the past 12 months many hundreds of United States ex-service men have returned. I have had the privilege of meeting some of them, and it was a poignant and moving occasion. I take this opportunity to salute them for their bravery and nobility of purpose in coming here all those years ago to see off the forces of tyranny and oppression.

To paraphrase my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, the long shadow of the cold war has been lifted to reveal smaller but intense shadows. No fewer than 21 civil wars are now taking place, even if television cameras tend to ignore most of them.

As important debate continues about the future of NATO and the Western European Union, the WEU. These are heady days. The former United States Secretary of State, James Baker, talked of NATO stretching potentially from Vancouver to Vladivostok. The simple fact, however, is that Europe suffers from significant military deficiencies, particularly in terms of intelligence

[Mr. Richard Spring]

and logistics. To put it bluntly, we have limited air transport capacity. We would not be able to mount a major airlift of troops. Last autumn, British troops were deployed to Bosnia in United States transport aircraft, because we do not have the required support capacity on hand.

It is true that my constituency enjoys significant economic spin-offs because of the 7,000 American personnel, plus dependants, at RAF Mildenhall and RAF Lakenheath, which my hon. Friend the Minister has visited. They put about £200 million into the economy. The relationship between those bases and the local community is, happily, not bettered anywhere in the world. The essential factor, however, is that that continuing United States presence in Britain and Europe is critical to our defence.

That relationship has had its tensions, but there is absolutely no question about the fact that, time and time again, it has been Britain and the United States that have promptly reacted, together, to events while, at times, our European partners have sat on the sidelines. The successful prosecution of the Falklands war would not have been possible without the considerable intelligence gathering support from the Americans.

Britain and Europe have legitimate security concerns in the middle east. The invasion of Kuwait threatened not only the stability of the region, but our oil supplies. Hon. Members may wish to remind themselves that Kuwaiti independence could not have been regained without American military power.

President Bush announced that United States forces in Europe would be halved to 150,000 by 1995; President Clinton is talking about reducing that number to 100,000 by 1996. The network of shared intelligence and signals appears, happily, to remain unaffected by those plans.

Part and parcel of this shared relationship, and still important to our security, is our independent nuclear deterrent. Whatever we think of the horrors of war, we cannot wish away nuclear weaponry. I hope that the British Government will continue to make it clear that, for us, a limited testing programme is important.

Most importantly, I urge the Government to press continually for recognition by the Americans of the importance of their presence in Europe. I am pleased that my constituency will, with the arrival of the new F15E fighter, host what many regard to be the most advanced tactical fighter currently in use. I am glad that we shall also continue to host the vital United States air force transport centre, now including the reconnaissance and special service missions. My constituents welcome that unreservedly.

Above all, my constituents recognise the importance of the American presence as a continuing guarantee of our security in a volatile and turbulent world. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to seek to ensure a continuing and substantial American commitment to the security of Europe, particularly as the new Administration in Washington formulates its defence goals.

As every business man knows, the home market is an important spring-board to export success. The defence industry is a great success story in terms of employment and technology, both directly and indirectly. Firms in my constituency that provide high-technology goods to the defence industry have seen their sales to export markets treble in the past few years. That has also increased employment opportunities.

A good home market is not only good for a firm's business and thereafter its employment and technology, but increases its standing abroad. Overseas buyers feel comforted by the size of a company in many instances. Even during the recession, there have been success stories in the defence export business in my constituency. Those companies would suffer catastrophically if ever the Labour party's defence policies were implemented.

I do not exaggerate when I say that the world needs Britain with an adequate defence capability. The country needs the defence industry for jobs, and also for high technology with its range of important spin-offs.

Time and time again, the instinctive love of freedom and democracy of the British people has been tested in adversity. We have never let ourselves or the world down. With that in mind, we must pursue a defence policy that is equal to our strategic needs. We owe it to ourselves and to our children to do just that.

9.21 pm

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): The last time I wound up a debate it was a debate on the Army. I suspected on that occasion that the Minister had come under friendly fire. This time, with the exception of two Conservative speakers, everyone has been sniping at the Minister. The first reason for the sniping is the fact that the estimates that we are debating will be superseded in a fortnight by the new defence estimates for 1993. We have had to wait almost 12 months for the debate. I understand now why the Government did not want a debate. There may not even be a debate on next year's estimates after today's events.

The debate today has not been about money. We are not to vote on whether the defence estimates are correct —that has been done on the nod. The debate has been about the Government's stewardship of the defence of the country, and there is a credibility gap there that is every bit as big as the £50 billion budget deficit. The Secretary of State has not arrived in the Chamber yet—I presume that he will be coming back. He came to the House earlier today with a lot of bluster and attacked my hon. Friends and me. I was surprised that the Secretary of State was able to pin anything on me. I am classed as coming from the violent wing of the party, and he has done my credibility no end of good.

The only thing that the Secretary of State really said today was that there were to be cuts. When his remarks are distilled, they show that he said that both the naval and the RAF reserve were to be cut. He came to the House, attacked the Labour party and then cut the defence capability of the country once more. The Government do not want a defence review—that would never do, although nearly every Conservative Member and all Opposition Members called for one. We are talking about salami—slicing, as has been mentioned.

I had the pleasure of serving with the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin) on the Select Committee on Agriculture for many years. It was a special pleasure to hear the hon. Gentleman attack the Government. He did it very well, as one would expect from a former Defence Minister. He realised that there were going to be cuts in the reserves and he made it clear to the

House that he found that unacceptable. The hon. Gentleman was also concerned, as are all other hon. Members, about the defence industry in the west country. It plays a major role in that part of England and the Government have no policy whatsoever for providing alternative jobs in the area. The subject of Westland helicopters was also mentioned, and I shall return to that later.

The Government have no idea of where they are going. The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) agreed with us on that point. Judging from what he said tonight, it would be difficult to get a bayonet between his policies and those of the Labour party. He must have been reading our manifesto. My experience of Liberals is that they usually carry bayonets anyway. I think the hon. and learned Gentleman was a little churlish to say that, although the Labour party wants a defence review, the Government are right to say that there would be leaks. I find it surprising that a member of a party that believes in open government should worry about leaks from the defence chiefs of staff. There should have been a defence review and the chiefs of staff should have known about it. There would have been leaks—they are part and parcel of the system—but if we say that we should not have a defence review because we are afraid of leaks, we shall never have one in future.

The hon. Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) attacked Labour nuclear policy, but that was a smokescreen because he then put the knife into the Government. When I first heard the hon. Gentleman, I thought, "If I were a Conservative, I would want him to be a Minister," but it then became clear that he does not agree with Government policy.

The hon. Gentleman said that the saving of £9 million on Belize was not worth it. Central America is a very unstable part of the world, but it is extremely important. If we pull out, we shall find ourselves with the same difficulties that we had in the Falklands. I have not forgotten that the Conservative Government were responsible for the Falklands war because they withdrew the naval ship.

The hon. Gentleman did not agree with the short-sighted measure to reduce the number of battalions. He knows that we cannot meet our commitments and I am sure that he agrees that we should have a defence review. He is concerned, as we are, that the 1·5 per cent. pay increase to the armed forces will continue.

The Secretary of State does as the Chancellor says, and it is no coincidence that there are now rumours that defence was not part of the review being carried out by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury who knew that the Secretary of State would give in without going to the star chamber. It would be wrong for the 1·5 per cent. pay increase to continue. As I explained in the debate on the Army, as those in the armed forces rarely have mortgages, that represents a cut in their wages over the years.

Other right hon. and hon. Members have made valuable contributions to the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) touched on a variety of important issues, some of them concerning his constituency. The only real support for the Government came from the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton), who is not in his place. We shall miss him towering over us at the Dispatch Box and I pay tribute to the honesty of his answers, which is not always the case with other Ministers. I disagreed with a lot of what he said, but we were on common ground with regard to ground troops in Bosnia. I wish him well on the Back Benches.

I agree with the comments of the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) about the Scottish regiments. He seemed to think that radioactivity would stop at the Scottish border. I represent Carlisle, which is the last city in England. When I look out of my window I see Chapelcross, the last nuclear power station in England. The hon. Gentleman seemed confused about the nuclear deterrent and keeping Rosyth, but I understand his problem.

The hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) was devastating. The arguments he used against his own Government were based on experience, but again he called for a defence review, as did other hon. Members.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) must be congratulated on bringing to light the scandal about market testing at RAF St. Athan. The company concerned has done more harm to the RAF in one year than the Soviet air force did in 40 years. That is the result of privatisation. It is dogma ridden and dogma driven. Market forces are paramount. Whatever base one visits, one hears about market testing. I remember going to a real market in Hong Kong at 6 o'clock in the morning because Chinese chickens for British forces based there were being market tested. It is nonsense. It is dogma driven and we should take this as an opportunity to stop and reconsider.

In the olden days, when Ministers were honourable Members, someone would have resigned over the situation that my hon. Friend has exposed. However, that is not the case now. Times have changed. Anyone who has read Alan Clark's book will realise that. I have been doing a little reading of his work as well. It is not so much the content that seems to remind me of Ministers as the title. I am, of course, referring to his book "The Donkeys". I borrowed my copy from the War Office library, which shows how old it is. That is his famous book, for which he will be remembered, with the famous quote about British troops fighting like lions but being led by donkeys.

My experience of the armed forces is that all the donkeys have now left. The generals have left and have gone to work for the Jockey Club. Donkeys are stubborn, stupid creatures. Some may find them lovable, but they remind me of Ministers on the Treasury Bench—they do not have the ears, but I am sure that someone finds them lovable.

I say that because the Government have refused to have a defence review, which has led to overstretch in many parts of the armed forces. For example, we know that the Government will cancel the tactical air-to-surface missile, the sub-strategic nuclear weapon. They know it, the Royal Air Force knows it, but the Government are too stubborn to tell us. We do not know the future. They are not prepared to tell us. The 1989 White Paper said that the WE117 nuclear bomb could not continue beyond the 1990s. A Minister has since said that it will go into the next decade. We know that TASM is doomed. Why do not the Government say so?

There has been much comment about the European helicopter 101. I recently visited the Westland factory in Yeovil. It is a good aircraft. A promise of an order was placed in 1987—six years ago—yet the Minister is still too stubborn to say where the Government will place that order. There is some opposition in the RAF, but

[Mr. Eric Martlew]

sometimes Ministers have to lead; donkeys rarely do, but Ministers must. The west country needs that order if Britain is to continue to have a viable helicopter industry in the next century.

The Eurofighter 2000 is probably the most important technical and industrial project in Britain. The Minister told us in a recent parliamentary answer that the cost has gone up by some £250 million. We were told in January last year by Alan Clark—I presume that he was right—that it would fly at the Farnborough air show. It did not fly at Farnborough. It will not fly at Paris this week. We are not sure when it will take off. It has had two names, but it has not yet flown. If the Government do not get a grip on the project, bring the costs under control and bring it back on line, the enemies of that project, in this country and overseas, will come together, use that evidence and we shall lose it.

Will we get the larger share of the work? The Secretary of State said that an order would be placed for 250 aircraft, which will account for more than 50 per cent. of all orders that will be placed for it. According to the original agreement, that should mean that more than 50 per cent. of the work will be done in this country. I am not sure that will be the case, or whether the Government will buckle under German pressure.

It is a matter of concern that the Government are not prepared to listen and to re-examine issues. They seem to think only about elections. I am worried about the Government's statement today concerning reserves. I am a cynic when it comes to Government policy. They seem to be saying that they will use reserves instead of full-time troops. That is welcome in some ways, but I suspect that policy has nothing to do with giving the Territorial Army a greater role, but everything to do with making expensive professional soldiers redundant so that the Government can enjoy a cheaper option using part-timers. If I had not seen that happen in so many other areas, I might give the Government the benefit of the doubt.

The Secretary of State said that he would bring legislation before the House, and the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) pointed out that a change had occurred. We do not want a repeat of the Gulf situation, in which reservists had to be asked twice to volunteer because employers would not release them. A Minister had to go into a huddle at Buckingham palace to ensure that those reservists could be sent. Legislation is needed to make it clear that reservists must go if required, be given leave of absence from their work and be guaranteed a job when they return. The unemployed who are called up to serve must be given a guarantee that they and their families will not lose benefits. The sooner that such clarification is provided, the better.

In the 1983 general election, a Conservative party poster depicted Labour defence policy in the form of a soldier with his hands up. Another used the headline, "Labour isn't working". In the next general election, a good poster for Labour would be one showing a queue of redundant soldiers, sailors, airmen, shipbuilders and workers from the west country with the headline, "Tory defence policy".

The Tories do not have a credible economic policy. Theirs is not the party of sound money or of law and order—and theirs is not the party of strong defence.

9.37 pm

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Jonathan Aitken): It is with some relish that I rise to wind up the first day of this two-day defence debate. It began five and a half hours ago with a wide-ranging speech by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, the highlight of which was his important statement on the future of our reserve forces.

The pantomime horse of the two Opposition spokesmen who began and ended today's debate could not think how to answer my right hon. and learned Friend's statement. At first, the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) gave it a qualified welcome, but then fell back on a discreet silence after saying that he must wait and see. Winding up for the Opposition, the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) seemed to regard my right hon. and learned Friend's announcement as a wicked Tory device to increase the dole queues. He had five and a half hours to work out that response. Between that gap of ignorant silence at the beginning and prejudiced misrepresentation at the end, it would have been a good idea to use the consultation period to learn the views of the public and of the reserves themselves.

We believe that our proposals represent a good way forward for the reserves in the new security atmosphere, which the reserves themselves will largely welcome because of the new tasks and roles that they will be given. Although I will not hesitate to give way to Opposition Members, I think that they should allow the consultation period to proceed: I believe that it will result in a welcome for the announcement made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Martlew: How much will the proposal cost and how much will they save?

Mr. Aitken: I think that, in round figures, there will be a saving of up to £10 million, but all that will come out during the consultation period.

I am bound to confess that I have an advantage here. Because of ministerial defence cuts, the House now has only three defence Ministers; the Opposition, overstaffed as always, have four defence spokesmen. One Minister must therefore speak twice during this two-day debate and I shall be opening the Monday debate. It is possible that, because of the breadth and depth of some of the topics that have been covered today, they would best be dealt with on Monday: I am thinking particularly of nuclear issues, the European fighter aircraft and one or two other matters. However, I shall do my best to answer the points that have been raised today, in so far as that is possible.

The hon. Member for South Shields opened his speech—as he often does, courteously and correctly—by paying tribute to our armed forces and to MOD civilians. Naturally, I share his view. Apart from that common ground, however, I considered his speech a rubbish of an oration. It contained not a word of constructive thought or policy on the future defence of our country; it was one long whine and whinge about a so-called collection of scandals, which became markedly less scandalous on examination.

One of the first great scandals unearthed by the hon. Gentleman—it dated back to 1988; he was digging quite deep—related to the extra money that he thought had been wasted on submarine refits. Let me give the hon. Gentleman a history lesson. He will recall that, in the wake of dramatic events in eastern Europe in the late 1980s, we

had to review the size of our planned nuclear submarine fleet. We concluded that a smaller fleet would be sufficient in the new strategic environment and I do not think that the Opposition disagree with that conclusion. In September 1990, following careful analysis, we decided to pay off two submarines, HMS Warspite and HMS Churchill. It was, of course, a difficult decision, in view of the expenditure already incurred on their refits; but our assessment showed that paying them off was the right decision and the best way of saving the taxpayer the maximum amount.

As the hon. Gentleman will recall, those developments were started by no less than the fall of the Berlin wall on 9 November 1989. That is a significant date: HMS Warspite's refit had begun in March 1988 and HMS Churchill's in April 1989. Planning for the refits had begun even earlier. I wonder if the hon. Gentleman foresaw the fall of the Berlin wall; I wonder whether he anticipated that we might need fewer submarines. I think that the Government made a sensible decision. There was nothing scandalous about it; in the long run, it was in the best interests of the defence budget.

So much for the hon. Gentleman's first scandal. His second was all about shipping fraud during the Gulf crisis. It would not have been the first or last conflict in which one or two people may have profiteered; I draw no conclusions, but that happens. Let us put the matter in context, however. The Gulf war deployment was the largest deployment of troops and equipment since the second world war, involving 46,000 personnel, 46,000 tonnes of freight, 87,000 tonnes of ammunition and 7,000 containers. It was our own internal audit investigation that uncovered evidence that there might have been some irregularities in the ship chartering process. We called in the MOD police fraud squad to investigate; the results of that investigation were passed to the Crown Prosecution Service in November last year. We cannot say more now for fear of prejudicing any prosecutions; but the notion that the MOD has been involved in some murky cover-up or scandal is not justified. I think that we did the only thing that we could do in the circumstances: we conducted a thorough investigation of what may have happened. I can say no more than that.

Dr. David Clark: As the Minister has denied my allegation of fraud, I presume that he is telling the House that there can be no prosecution.

Mr. Aitken: It is under consideration by the Crown Prosecution Service. For the hon. Gentleman to hold it up as some terrible scandal in which the Ministry of Defence is gravely at fault is nonsense and he should know that.

The hon. Member for South Shields may have been on slightly better ground with his third great scandal, which was the unfortunate episode of Airwork. *[Interruption.]* Before the hon. Gentleman gets too carried away with merriment, he will find that, at least partly, the laugh is on him. Both he and the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) have misunderstood the situation. I do not intend to back away from its gravity, but we must get the facts right. It was blamed on market testing and theologically driven policies. The hon. Member for Cardiff, West seemed to be under the extraordinary illusion that we had put Marks and Spencer in charge of defence research. The chief executive of defence research is Mr. John Chisholm. Mr. Littmoden, to whom the hon. Gentleman referred, is the MOD's advisor on market testing.

The contract which has given us so much trouble was nothing to do with market testing. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Carlisle said in his winding-up speech that it was about market testing. The contract is for a type of work that has been routinely undertaken by industry for many years. It has been our long-standing practice that a proportion of our aircraft repair and maintenance work is undertaken by industry. The RAF identifies those tasks which can sensibly be done in house and those—usually the longer and more specialised jobs—which can best be done by industry. Incorporating the fatigue modifications in the Tornado F3 fell into that category. Therefore, the question of an in-house bid from RAF St. Athan did not arise. It is off the beam to suggest that the aircraft industry cannot service the aircraft that it manufactures.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, West should not lose sight of the fact that it was our prompt action that terminated the contract as soon as it became evident that it was being performed in an unsatisfactory manner. That demonstrates our commitment to meeting the exacting quality standards that are so essential for defence equipment, particularly aircraft where flight safety considerations are paramount.

Mr. Morgan: There are three mistakes in what the Minister has said. I did not say that this had not been done previously and satisfactorily by British Aerospace. Secondly, the Minister is not correct to say that the Ministry of Defence took prompt action. The RAF at St. Athan called in the quality assurance directorate which, as I said in my speech, merely checked the certificate without having checked any of the aircraft. Thirdly, on the question whether this was theologically driven, the Minister must face the fact that the Government have a general policy of, if it moves, privatise it. In this case, they did privatise it and now the aircraft cannot move.

Mr. Aitken: The hon. Gentleman is exaggerating considerably. We acknowledge that this is an unfortunate episode. A small number of Tornado F3s have been damaged, but not as seriously as some press speculation and the hon. Gentleman have suggested. The necessary work of surveying the aircraft and estimating the cost of repairs is under way and my Department will be claiming against Airwork in due course. With a claim and legal proceedings pending, we cannot go into detail, but I can assure the House—this is the important point raised by the hon. Member for Cardiff, West—that the RAF's operational capability is not affected by the small number of aircraft damaged or the delays to the modification programme. There are sufficient Tornado F3 aircraft to meet all our present commitments for the air defence of the United Kingdom and the detachment to enforce the no-fly zone over Bosnia.

The fourth and last great scandal of the hon. Member for South Shields was that of the service chiefs who were not allowed to participate in the deliberations on "Options for Change" because of a fear that they may be the source of leaks. That was the hon. Gentleman at his most distorting. He must have read the letter from Mr. Mottram which appeared in the newspapers. It rebuts the hon. Gentleman's comments and makes the reverse suggestion.

[Mr. Aitken]

Some time ago the question was asked whether there were appropriate defence staff available following the 1984 reorganisation for the review. Mr. Mottram wrote:

"The answer is, it was. As my article briefly mentioned, the Options exercise was conducted under Ministerial and top management supervision by a small working group of central policy and programmes staffs. Three of its members were military and were selected on the basis of their jobs within the Defence Staff. This also produced a valuable spread of Service expertise involving a Vice-Admiral, a Major-General and an Air Vice-Marshal. Detailed analysis of possible options drew on the advice of the Service Plans divisions. The circle of those involved in the whole exercise in both the central and single-Service staffs was tightly drawn to enable a range of options to be looked at and often discarded on a confidential basis. This was intended to help to avoid the selective leaks to the media of the kind which can damage Service morale and indeed the reputation of the Services."

In plain language, Mr. Mottram is saying that the service chiefs were called in—not the chiefs of staff, but their major representatives—and that they were involved in all stages of the discussions. No one was excluded because they might be the cause of a leak; they were brought in to avoid leaks, so the hon. Gentleman has got it topsy-turvy. That was his fourth dud scandal. Much of his speech had nothing to do with defence policy, nor did it contain any constructive ideas. It consisted of trying to rake up scandals out of pretty thin air and was a failure as a result.

May I deal briskly with one or two issues raised by my hon. Friends and others who have participated in the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin) mentioned the EH101. I can assure him that we are actively thinking about helicopter procurement and support. We have, of course, taken note of what Lord Younger has said, but the paramount consideration is to meet the needs of the armed services with proper value-for-money procurement. He also mentioned the Paris air show. Although I do not rule out second-hand Pumas entirely as a small part of our requirement, it is well known in Paris and elsewhere that this Minister is a Puma sceptic. I have said as much at internal meetings and I repeat it to the House. To other hon. Members who mentioned the EH101, I can say that I very much hope that we can find the right price.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) had the intellectual honesty to say that a defence review would not mean the avoidance of difficult decisions. His words must have come as a terrible blow to the Opposition, who have for a long time used the defence review as a device to avoid forming a policy. I agreed with much of what the hon. and learned Gentleman said and I assure him that when taking decisions on procurement policy we of course take into account factors such as export prospects and industrial considerations as well as value for money. It has been helpful to have the views of the House on the wider issues in our discussions about the European fighter aircraft and other matters.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), the Chairman of the Select Committee, on the Committee's report on the defence estimates for 1992. I agree that the threat of nuclear proliferation has been underestimated. I heard what he said about Belize and I look forward to receiving his report later this year. He was right to emphasise the fact that we shall be keeping a training presence and capability there. I shall deal in a moment with the interesting clash between him and my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton).

I am grateful for the tribute that the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) paid to the Cheshires who are his constituents. If I may, I shall write to him about his points about the pay office in Glasgow, which are primarily a constituency interest. I thank him for his contribution to the debate.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell made his first speech from the Back Benches for 11 years. He said in his resignation statement on 10 June, which I thought was a skilful blend of humour and loyalty, that his ministerial post from which he retired at his own request was one of the best jobs in Government. If I may return the compliment, I think that the Government were fortunate to have in that job for the past few years one of their best men. He gave us a timely reminder that defence is not an economic island isolated from the pressures of the economy in general or the public sector borrowing requirement. Defence tasks consist of the imperative, the desirable and the optional. One need only turn to the White Paper and read defence tasks 1, 2 and 3 to find that that is so. Yes, there must be limits.

There was an interesting debate, to which I shall perhaps return on Monday, between my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster and my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell. The Select Committee does the job of defence reporting without financial responsibility and therefore, in a sense, has an easy task. It is easy for a slightly financially unworldly note to creep into such reports. Where to draw the line and where to get value for money is a profound theme and I shall refer to it later as it runs with several other speeches. Finally, may I say what good sound sense my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell spoke about Bosnia.

I was grateful for the tribute that the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) paid to the security forces in Northern Ireland. I listened carefully to his constructive thoughts on the effects of the amalgamation and particularly to his point that recruits are badly needed for the officer corps. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces will heed those points carefully and we shall take note of them.

I was moved by the tribute that my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) paid to the dedication and professionalism of the Staffords, and he is rightly proud and pleased that they have been reprieved. I listened carefully to his analysis of the situation in the former Yugoslavia. He has shown consistency and great moral courage in his parliamentary stance. I have not always been able to agree with him. All of us are uneasy and unhappy about the dilemma that has faced the international community and we are profoundly distressed at our inability to bring peace to the killing fields of this civil war.

I agree with my hon. Friend that we must make one more effort to negotiate, but beyond that the new military strategy for the former Yugoslavia is very difficult territory indeed, as he recognised. He made me blush with his tributes to Nixon and he conjured up ghosts, but I was not able to hear a clear strategy that will be acceptable to the House and to the country, which is where we differ.

The hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) wants to scrap regimental amalgamations in Scotland. I am

afraid that we cannot follow him down that path, but my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces will have heard his strong views.

Mr. Welsh: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Aitken: I have only five minutes and I am trying to cover everyone who has spoken.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) seemed to be under the strange illusion that we are conducting our deliberations by stealth and behind closed doors. He used a vivid phrase about butchery behind closed doors. To use a military metaphor, I think that he went slightly over the top. Far from there being any stealth, we have, not counting defence questions, discussed the matter in the House on no fewer than 32 occasions since last year. That includes three single service debates, the debate on the defence industry, this two-day debate and 12 Adjournment debates. We shall try to answer his wide-ranging points in due course, but I am afraid that I cannot accept his thesis that we are doing butchery behind closed doors and that a valued national asset is being destroyed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) chided me for my optimism about the diminution of the threat, as I perceived it, from having visited former East Germany. I beg to differ with him on that point. There has been a great change in the strategic environment, which affects enormously our defence and readiness posture. Our defence posture for many years was based on the notion that the Soviets were coming, and now they are not. Our reserve forces, our state of readiness and the level of our procurement are influenced very much by that thought.

My hon. Friend was on weak ground with his amphibious forces point. We have ordered a landing platform helicopter vessel and are carrying out project definition studies on the landing platform docks, about which he was concerned. More careful thinking is going into our defence posture for the future than he seemed to give us credit for.

I was glad that, in one of the final speeches, my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring) mentioned the great importance of the US-UK relationship. The constituency of Bury St. Edmunds, as he knows, is quite dear to my heart since I was born there and my father represented it for many years. Having lived in the arena of the American bases, I know what an enormous contribution they have made to the security of Europe and of the free world. On my way to my hon. Friend's constituency, I visited the American forces chapel in St. Paul's cathedral. There is a wonderful epitaph to those who gave their lives, which, if my memory serves me correctly, reads:

"They gave their lives defending freedom against the assaults of our enemies."

That is really what the American relationship is all about. Its purpose is not just, as my hon. Friend said, to lift capacity, intelligence sharing and nuclear testing, important though those matters are. The United States' presence in Europe has been of enormous importance to our security and I was pleased that one hon. Member brought that out so skilfully.

I do not think that I have quite answered the question asked by the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) about auxiliary oiler replenishment vessels. It is true that they have had a somewhat chequered history. As was made clear at the time, the decision to build a second AOR vessel, Fort George, at Swan Hunter was taken on the basis of wider considerations of the kind being urged upon me by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East —wider considerations than the bottom line on the tender.

However, in response to his specific question about the transfer of Fort Victoria to the Cammell Laird yard at Birkenhead, I can tell the hon. Member for Thurrock exactly what the cost to the Government was. It was nothing. A commercial decision was taken by Harland and Wolff——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

Cleveland County Council (Abolition)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

10 pm

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): I am grateful for this opportunity to initiate a debate on the proposed abolition of Cleveland county council. When the Secretary of State for the Environment announced the review of local government boundaries last year, he said that the primary task of the Local Government Commission was to ensure that local service providers would "reflect the community identity", and to reflect the wishes and aspirations of the local people in its recommendations.

One of the first local authorities to be considered was the county of Cleveland, which was drawn together in 1974 out of Hartlepool county borough, Stockton rural district, Teesside county borough and the urban districts of Guisborough, Saltburn and Marske, Loftus, and Skelton and Brotten, in my constituency. The purpose of the debate is to place on record my strong disapproval of the tactics employed by Cleveland county council since 10 May, when the Local Government Commission presented four options for restructuring local government in Cleveland.

The preferred option was to abolish Cleveland county council and replace it with the four unitary district authorities of Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Stockton and Langbaurgh. When the announcement of the preferred option was made on 10 May, the ferocity of the immediate reaction of Cleveland county council leaders left most people astounded. Yet it proved an accurate early sign of what was to come.

Paul Harford, the leader of Cleveland county council, described the announcement of the preferred option by the Local Government Commission as a "political fix". A week later, in "Personnel Comment", the internal staff newsletter of Cleveland county council, Mr. Bruce Stevenson, its chief executive and therefore a public servant, said:

"The Commission's arguments are weak, they appear to have overlooked many issues, failed to follow their guidance, failed to present their evidence objectively and their proposals to test local opinion verge on farce".

Things did not stop there. Councillor Paul Harford returned to the fray at a full meeting of the county council, calling the commission's initial report "deliberately misleading". Cleveland chief executive Bruce Stevenson said of the report:

"it had reached a perverse conclusion which could not be reached by any reasonable person".

Language of that nature used by those who hold positions of authority and responsibility is at best irresponsible and at worst seeks to undermine the integrity and independence of the Local Government Commission. One can only speculate as to why no such comments were made before 10 May.

Cleveland county council employs more than 20,000 people, and in May each of them received a letter from the council leader and chief executive calling on them to

"lobby as a massive campaign team"

for the council's future. The first example of this lobby of public servants was demonstrated on 11 May, when the *Northern Echo* decided to conduct a readers' poll, votes being registered by telephone calls to two different numbers, one for yes and one for no. The result of the poll was that 77 per cent. of respondents were against the proposed abolition of Cleveland county council, and only 23 per cent. were in favour.

Only afterwards did the full story leak out. I have here a memo sent to employees in the environment, development and transportation department of the council, which says:

"The *Northern Echo* is conducting a phone survey to determine people's opinion on the Commission's proposals. Bruce Stevenson"—

the chief executive—

"has given the OK for the ban on 0800 numbers to be lifted so that we can phone 0891 515153 to register a vote against the proposals . . . so get phoning!!!!!!!"

Our concern at this action was not the misuse of public funds, at which I am sure that the Audit Commission will be looking closely, but rather that public servants should be authorised to use council taxpayers' money in an attempt to distort an honest attempt to gauge public opinion.

Next came a series of public meetings which had been organised by the commission, for the express purpose of listening to local people expressing their views about the type of local government that they wished to see. At the first meeting, held in Middlesbrough on 24 May 1993, the vast majority of the audience were employees of Cleveland county council. Speakers supporting unitary districts were heckled and barracked; those supporting the county were given standing ovations. Those few members of the public who had come along to give their views were intimidated into silence.

Such was the display of intimidation that Sir John Banham, chairman of the Local Government Commission, remarked in a television interview a few days later that people admitted to public meetings were

"putting on the kind of display which I last saw when I was dealing with Derek Hatton in Liverpool."

What a sad indictment. I do not blame the employees for this behaviour. They have been submitted to the same campaign of disinformation as the rest of us.

In the May edition of "Direct Approach", the Cleveland county direct services newsletter, the front page leads with three bold headings:

"Services under threat", "Your job could be on the line", and

"Look inside and take action."

Under a section inside headed "Your job", it asks:

"What will a Middlesbrough Unitary Authority mean for staffing?"

and gives the answer:

"At least 15 per cent. job losses amongst permanent staff."

The Local Government Commission, in its report, states that it would envisage a reduction of staff under the four-district option of 2 per cent.

A similar tactic to mislead and deceive was attempted by the county council in its contact with the public. A booklet which cost £26,000 to produce and was sent to all homes in Cleveland stated on the front cover:

"Your Local Services are under threat—Read this leaflet, it could save you £100 per year or more."

Let us look a little closer at the claim that the Local Government Commission's preferred option could add £100 a year to the average council tax bill. The LGC, which, of course, had detailed access to the proposals of both the districts and the county, stated that it expected the result of reorganisation to lead to a £46 a year cut in the average level of council tax in Cleveland.

I have already referred to the deception of the council's own staff in the newsletter "Direct Approach", which warned of a 15 per cent. cut in jobs, yet, in communication with the public whom they are there to serve, they claim that the four unitary districts would cost an extra £23 million.

Normally, job losses would be associated with reductions in expenditure, not increases. It is expedient to claim massive job losses to one's employees, as clearly they will be motivated to work against reorganisation—understandably, because their prospects and security are in doubt. On the other hand, it is also expedient to claim that council taxpayers will have to pay more, as people are naturally fearful of increased bills and expense, and will react accordingly.

In short, one can make both these assertions, but they cannot both be true. Given that they come from the same source, Cleveland county council, one or both of them must be untrue. Therefore, Cleveland county council has blatantly sought to deceive either its own employees or, more seriously, the public whom it exists to serve. Such deception should be exposed and condemned.

Another example of this campaign of disinformation which I place before the House this evening concerns the future of a £28·5 million loan to Cleveland county council from the European Investment Bank. On 19 May, Cleveland county council issued a press release stating:

"a multi-million pound loan for major construction projects in the area is in jeopardy because the European bank involved is worried about the possible outcome of local government re-organisation in the area."

The National and Local Government Officers Association, in its local Cleveland county branch newsletter edition No. 3, said:

"the best attended branch meeting in years was addressed by County Councillor Paul Harford who in a detailed speech vigorously attacked the Local Government Commission's recommendations. He also revealed a shock decision of the European Community bankers who are not prepared to fund projects in Cleveland if the area was split up."

A recent meeting of the Cleveland county branch of NALGO voted to make £10,000 available for the fight to create a Teeside authority. I have been told that that money had been used to fund an organisation called Campaign for Teeside, which has been placing advertisements in the local press. In a letter to county branch members in Cleveland, the general secretary of the union, Alan Jinkinson, said:

"the union is gravely concerned at the county campaign . . . the action of some Cleveland County branch members has caused a great deal of concern locally. Many of this campaign's claims are unfounded and are only causing confusion and concern to people relying on local services and employees in local government."

This week, that stance was overwhelmingly endorsed by the NALGO national conference meeting in Brighton.

To return to the European Investment Bank loan on 19 May 1993, County Councillor Paul Harford wrote to his colleagues on the council saying:

"I enclose a copy of a letter received yesterday from the EIB showing their reluctance to support our £28·5 million roads programme if the Cleveland area is served by four authorities in future."

The headlines that followed must have brought joy to the eyes and ears of the Cleveland public relations team: "Threat of shake up", "Risk to £28·5 million construction loan", "Loan in jeopardy", and "Projects in jeopardy".

That night, the chief executive of Cleveland county council, Bruce Stevenson, appeared on BBC "Look North" and said:

"It"—

the European Investment Bank loan—

"can only be put together by combining the work which has been done in separate Boroughs."

Given that one of the three projects to be funded by that loan was the Guisborough bypass, which is vital to my constituency, I contacted the European Investment Bank in Luxembourg. The bank confirmed that it was content to offer the loan to the four unitary districts and said:

"There is no fundamental problem about reorganisation. This has been blown out of all proportion. It's a small legal problem, more of a technicality."

Having been caught out again, the chairman of the county economic development and transportation committee, David Walsh, had the nerve to say on local BBC Radio Cleveland:

"There is no doubt that the loan was at risk. But I can now confirm that, due to the hard and diligent work of county council officers the loan has been secured for the people of Cleveland."

One can only conclude from those examples that the whole episode had been designed to announce the bad news, destabilise confidence in the competency and ability of the districts and, when the truth is revealed, be prepared to announce the good news that the county had saved the day.

There are many more examples that I could give the House, such as the county's claim that the ring and ride scheme, which provides a vital service to the most vulnerable in our community—the disabled and the elderly—would be under threat if Cleveland county were abolished. In reality, the unitary districts had included in their submissions plans to improve the level of service in the scheme.

Ms Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar) *rose*——

Mr. Bates: The campaign contains the worst excesses of black propaganda. Political and civil service leaders have shown a propensity to deceive their employees and the people that they serve.

Ms Mowlam *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order.

Mr. Bates: Worst of all, by launching this campaign in a vital two months in which the people of Cleveland have had their first opportunity for 20 years to express their views on what form of local government they want, political and civil service leaders have sought to subvert the course of local democracy.

With only three weeks left in the consultation period, I appeal to the political and civil service leaders of the county council. If they have any faith in local democracy and public service, they should drop the campaign and let the people speak, or be prepared to face the consequences.

10.14 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): My hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates) has made a powerful speech and I welcome the opportunity to respond to a number of the concerns that he has raised.

It may be helpful to recall that, in December 1990, we announced that there was to be a review of local government. Our reasons were that, outside the main

[Mr. Tony Baldry]

conurbations, the system of two principal authorities in each area still prevails, the usefulness of two tiers is being questioned and the continued existence of certain authorities which were created by the local government reorganisation of 1974 but which have not succeeded in inspiring local loyalty is also in question. Another challenge is that the role of authorities is changing as they increasingly become enablers rather than direct providers of services. Therefore, we have an opportunity to think afresh about the structure of local authorities.

The Government do not see this as an opportunity to impose a new pattern of local authorities according to a national prescription; nor do we believe that it is necessary to have a uniform pattern of authorities in every part of the country. Therefore, this does not mean the wholesale abolition of either county councils or district councils, nor even unitary authorities everywhere; it means arriving at the right solution for each community. We intend to adopt a practical approach in response to local views and conditions.

The Local Government Commission was set up last year to review the structure, boundaries and electoral arrangements of the shire counties and to assess the case for unitary authorities. The commission has a statutory remit and is independent, but final decisions will of course be for Parliament to take.

Local government spending is significant. It is more than a quarter of all public spending—over £1,300 for every adult and child in the country. Local government needs to be in strong shape to make sure that it uses this money to deliver services effectively for local people.

There is a proper concern at the need to restore real community loyalty to local government areas, to reflect a sense of belonging based on where people live and work, and on a long-standing historical and geographical sense of identity. The task for the commission is to review local government and to recommend structures which reflect that sense of local identity and local interests, and to secure effective and convenient local government.

The commission is seeking to assess community identity in each area in a number of ways: through opinion polling, public meetings, freepost and questionnaires. Of course, it is receiving many, many letters from individuals and local organisations. In bringing forward its initial proposals, it is for the commission to decide what weight to give to the varied responses. Local interest has been substantial, with thousands of people writing to make their views known in the review areas.

The task confronting the commission is challenging. The conduct of reviews is a matter for the commission. It has been given guidelines which it is obliged to follow. It has been given guidance on policy and procedures set out in documents that are widely available free of charge from the Department of the Environment, Local Government 1 Division, Room N7/15, 2 Marsham street, London SW1.

This means that everyone should know the parameters within which the commission should be operating, and everyone concerned can make known their views on any commission proposals affecting their area. We want local people to get fully involved and make clear their views. This review is about the possible future map of England. Understandably, the review has provoked substantial interest in the local government press and among the local authorities concerned.

It is imperative that local people voice their concerns and let the commission know their views, individually or together, reflecting the views of local organisations such as chambers of commerce, women's institutes, doctors' practices and trade councils. Individually and collectively, the people of England should let the commission know what they think about the commission's proposals for their part of England.

We have sought to ensure that local people have plenty of opportunities to put their views forward. The formal consultation periods commence with a two-and-a-half-month initial period in which to put views forward. There will then be over two months in which to comment on draft recommendations, such as those recently published for Cleveland and elsewhere.

Simply because people have commented and made their views known at an earlier stage should not deter them from making their views known once the commission has made recommendations for their area. There is then a further six-week period in which to make representations to the Secretary of State on any eventual final recommendations. So a number of opportunities exist for local people to make clear their views.

On Monday, the commission will publish proposals for Humberside, Lincolnshire and North Yorkshire. Those proposals, like the others that the commission has put forward, are its proposals and not those of the Government. They are proposals for consultation; they are not immutable decisions. The House will appreciate that it would be impertinent of me to comment on any proposals on any area while the review by the commission is still being carried out.

Ms Mowlam: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the Minister to say that it would be unacceptable for him to comment during the consultation period remembering what is happening in other parts of the country, bearing in mind that, after a full contribution from the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates), Opposition Members have not had a chance to say anything?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is for the Minister to decide whether or not to give way.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The subject is important for the whole of our county and some perceptive criticisms have been made by my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates). It is important——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is in no way a point of order.

Mr. Baldry: I believe that it would be impertinent of me to comment on any proposals that the commission has brought forward. It would not be right for any Minister to do that at this or any stage, until people have had the fullest opportunity to comment, and I am surprised that the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam) tempts me to comment.

However, I wish to speak about local authorities' publicity campaigns and their associated costs, which are, rightly, of concern to my hon. Friend and others. That is a proper matter on which I can comment at this stage.

Some might be tempted to think that publicity and frenetic advertising campaigns during the early stages of the review will influence local people's views of their own community identity, and even perhaps the views of the commission.

People should understand that the commission is, and will be, independent. Aggressive advertising campaigns and knocking copy against other councils will not influence the commission in favour of a particular local authority option. The straightforward and simple fact is that people know where they live and with what they identify. Slick advertising will not change that perception.

There has been no change in local authority permitted spending and grant levels to cover any extra spending on any local authority publicity and advertising campaigns to influence the outcome of the commission's review. So money being spent on such campaigns—such as those to which my hon. Friend referred—is money that is not being spent on providing services elsewhere. I suggest that the best way in which to build community loyalty is the effective delivery of high-quality local services, not frenetic advertising campaigns.

Local councils should not use public funds to mount a publicity campaign, the purpose of which is to persuade people to hold a particular view. Where councils overstep the mark and neglect their financial responsibilities, that should be brought to the attention of the local auditor, who has powers in respect of unlawful spending.

People can make their views known by writing to the Local Government Commission for England. The commission has made considerable efforts to let people know how to contact it. I shall give its address, because I think that it is important that, should any constituent approach any hon. Member with concerns about any aspect of the commission's work, that hon. Member should make it clear to that person that the commission wants to hear his views and that everyone is entitled to be heard. People should write to the Local Government Commission for England, at Dolphyn court, 10-11 Great Turnstile, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London, WC1. There should be no mistake about the fact that everyone has the opportunity to have his views taken on board throughout the review process.

Disraeli observed:

"England is the only important European community that is still governed by traditionary interests."

The best guardians of those interests are the men and women of England. It is their map of England that is being redrawn. It is their voices that must be heard. It is their views that will count.

10.26 pm

Ms Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): A number of crucial points should be raised in the debate.

I must respond, in particular, to one point made by the Minister which was completely unsubstantiated—that there was evidence to suggest that Cleveland county council, by advertising and publicising the services that it has, historically, offered to the people of Cleveland, is, by default, not offering other services. He suggested that money is being moved from one budget head to another for such advertising.

Mr. Devlin: Will the hon. Lady give way on that point?

Ms Mowlam: No.

That argument has been put on numerous occasions, but each time Cleveland county council has provided evidence to prove that the money has been spent from the publicity budget. It has behaved just like any other local authority, which would fight its corner in exactly the same way. That the Minister suggested that Cleveland county council is in any way reneging on the services it offers to the local people is appalling.

The Minister said that the period of consultation will last for two months. Surely the debate is part of that consultation. It is unfair of the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates) to cover one side of the argument, and I welcome the opportunity to put the other. Correspondence in my mailbag reveals that people hold the exact opposite view to that put by the hon. Gentleman. People would prefer one authority, on a Teesside-wide basis. At a public meeting in Skelton, in the hon. Gentleman's own constituency, the overwhelming majority of people voted for a Teesside authority.

Mr. Devlin: That meeting was packed with council employees.

Ms Mowlam: The hon. Gentleman may shout that, but the employees of Cleveland county council have as much right as anyone else in Cleveland to argue for the desired options that they want. Just because they are employees does not make them lesser human beings. They have as much right to go to public meetings, write to Members of Parliament and argue their case as anyone else. I am pleased that many have taken the opportunity to do just that.

Many issues worry people in Cleveland. They are worried that, if the option that has been put by the commission goes through, authorities will be created—quangos of the kind that have been created over the years by the Conservatives—to provide services, such as emergency services and economic planning, across the four district authorities. In common with the development corporations and the training councils, they would be unaccountable——

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Ms Mowlam: They would be——

Mr. Mandelson: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Ms Mowlam: They would be unaccountable to the people——

Mr. Mandelson: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Ms Mowlam: They will be unaccountable to the people of Cleveland.

Mr. Mandelson: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Ms Mowlam: It is very clear that I am not giving way.

Mr. Mandelson: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There is no point of order. Ms Mowlam.

Mr. Mandelson: You do not know what the point of order is, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Ms Mowlam.

Ms Mowlam: People are worried that quangos will be set up, which will unaccountable to the people of Cleveland.

Mr. Mandelson: Will my hon. Friend give way on that point?

Ms Mowlam: That unaccountability worries the people of Cleveland——

Mr. Mandelson: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Ms Mowlam: That worries——

Mr. Mandelson: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is obvious that the hon. Lady is not giving way.

Mr. Mandelson: I just wanted my hon. Friend to give way on that point.

Ms Mowlam: I made it clear that I would not give way on either point.

I shall continue, for the third time, to try to make my argument. If we are talking about democracy and the rights of people in Cleveland, many people——

The motion having been made at Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 18 June 1993

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

Rents

9.34 am

Mr. Dudley Fishburn (Kensington): I beg leave to present a petition which

"sheweth that cruel and exaggerated rent increases are being awarded by rent officers and rent assessment committees to landlords of statutory tenants at a time of minimum inflation, falling property values, vacant property and decreasing construction costs, that these increases"—

often 20 times the rate of inflation—

"go counter to the free market, and that they are especially severe in central London.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House urgently review those sections of the law dealing with rent assessments for statutory tenants so that the original intention of these sections of the law, to protect statutory tenants be upheld.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc."

To lie upon the Table.

VAT (Fuel) and Student Fees

9.35 am

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): On behalf of my constituents and the people of Bolton, I wish to present a petition opposing the extension of taxation, particularly in respect of the extension of VAT to heating bills—attacks on the health of the elderly—and to student fees—attacks on learning and the quality of life.

"Wherefore your petitioners pray that this honourable House will do everything possible to prevent this increase in indirect taxation which particularly affects the old, the young and the poor of our country.

And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray, etc."

To lie upon the Table.

Dovelands Schools, Leicester

9.36 am

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): I beg leave to present a petition on behalf of the parents, governors and the teachers of Dovelands infants and junior school in my constituency because many of the buildings at that school are in a dangerous and intolerable condition. Many of them are insanitary and not weatherproof, and are in desperate need of improvement or replacement. Due to lack of funds, the local authority has not carried out that work, despite the fact that parts of the building, such as a piece that I have here, have fallen off and nearly killed children.

The petition asks

"that your honourable House will enable the children of Dovelands to be taught in safe, sanitary and worthy conditions and in accordance with the National Curriculum by ensuring that the necessary resources are made available for the works to be carried out now and before any tragedy befalls the school or any of its pupils as a result of these dangers"—

and in spite of the leaked intention to downgrade school buildings and school classes. The petition contains 5,000 signatures.

To lie upon the Table.

Science, Engineering and Technology

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—[Mr. Patnick.]

Relevant document: The First Report from the Science and Technology Committee on the Policy and Organisation of the Office of Science and Technology, [HC 228 of Session 1992-93.]

9.37 am

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. William Waldegrave): It is appropriate that the House is debating the White Paper together with the first report from the new Select Committee on Science and Technology, because, about a year ago, a process of national consultation was launched in the House. That led to the production of the White Paper, which has been broadly welcomed.

There has been genuine participation by many thousands of people all over the country—in the science and engineering communities, in the House, in another place and in the various institutions and associations representing scientists, engineers and science policy makers in this country and abroad. I say "abroad", because the issues in the White Paper have been discussed at some length with Science Ministers of the Group of Seven countries in the Carnegie meetings, which have now become a valuable feature of modern science policy making.

I think that I will be unchallenged when I say that the White Paper has been well received. Even the attempt by the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) to stir up some party-political fire was done slightly more for effect. He did not seem to have his heart in it, and his noble Friend in another place took a rather different view.

The beneficial effect of this national debate has been seen—if I may make one gentle party point—on the Opposition Benches, in that today we are to hear the first speech on science from the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam), to which we look forward with great interest. Perhaps if we are allowed to offer any advice to the Labour Party, it should be that its science spokesman, the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy, should win his place in the shadow Cabinet. It seems odd that there is not one there already.

I shall set out the arguments in relation not only to the White Paper but to the broader themes of science policy, and to the valuable contribution of the Select Committee under four general headings, and shall discuss some of the comments made about those four general themes, which underlie the White Paper. I shall reflect with the House on some of the comments made by heavyweight commentators and contributors throughout the science and engineering community.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): My right hon. Friend has referred to science policy. I am sure that he will agree that there has been a particular welcome for the White Paper from the world of engineering. This week, the Engineering Council and the four major engineering institutions—electrical, mechanical, chemical and civil—have said that the White Paper puts science and technology at the top of the political agenda. Can my right hon. Friend assure us that it will stay there from now on?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend gets directly to the heart of the matter. The first of my themes is indeed that the purpose of the White Paper has succeeded, and science and technology policy are at the heart of Government policy. More importantly, it has begun to correct—although only begun—the imbalance between the prestige of engineering and science and the importance that the engineers have felt they have had in policy-making matters. My hon. Friend rightly quotes the support that we have had from the engineering institutions. I would add to that the warm support that we have had from Sir William Barlow of the Royal Academy of Engineering, which echoes what my hon. Friend has said.

The determination and impetus of the White Paper is to make closer connections between our science and engineering base in the universities and research councils and in the private research laboratories—they have not been overlooked, as they are major contributors, particularly to technology transfer—and those in industry who have the prime responsibility for the creation of wealth.

I direct the attention of the House to an important article that appeared a couple of days ago in the *Evening Standard*, written by the chief economist of ICI, Mr. Richard Freeman. I quote this not because it is unusual, but because it stands for quite a wide range of comments made about the White Paper and the drive that lies behind it. He wrote:

"It is difficult to overstate the importance of the White Paper as the success or failure of the science and technology policy it contains will be a critical factor determining the competitiveness of the United Kingdom in the 1990s and beyond. It is, after all, the first realistic attempt by Government for more than 30 years to formulate a coherent and science and technology policy."

He went on to welcome the policies specifically, quoting them in detail—the focus on wealth creation, the creation of the Technology Foresight process, the publication of an annual "Forward Look", the new mission set out for the research councils, bringing them closer to their user communities, and, as he put it:

"the long overdue change in science and technology policy in that it will be co-ordinated and monitored by one Department —the Office of Science and Technology."

He quite rightly made the further point, which is legitimate, that, in that sector, where the expenditure of industry is greater than that of the Government—as it should be—success depends on industry playing its part as well. All the responses that we have had show that industry is willing to play that part.

I shall quote one other endorsement that we have had, and that my hon. Friends will have seen before coming to the debate. That is the parliamentary brief published by the CBI to assist hon. Members wishing to take part in the debate. A press release says:

"The CBI's technology and innovation committee welcomes many of the features of 'Realising our Potential' particularly the recognition that science and technology should be more strongly linked to the needs of industry in creating wealth. The committee considers that the White Paper offers a framework and building blocks to achieve that and welcomes the commitment of all Government Departments to the overall objective."

It goes on to welcome specific aspects of the White Paper.

Let me remind the House of the building blocks that the CBI described. The first is the creation, for the first time since the late 1950s, of a proper senior council of science and technology, which I will chair and which will contain senior members from academia and industry.

The second is the creation of the foresight mechanism, which we have studied closely and which exists in many other countries. We are now in the process of carrying forward the work for the establishment of that. The third

is the clarification of the mission of the research councils, and the fourth is the establishment of the new engineering and physical sciences research councils. Finally, there is a range of reforms on postgraduate training.

The White Paper has been broadly welcomed by one of the key constituencies at which it was aimed because one of its tasks is to bring the science base and the scientists and engineers in the research arms closer together with those who take industrial decisions. If we can achieve that, we shall have begun to spread more widely the success that we achieve in certain sectors in high technology industries.

The second theme is the reforms that we have proposed in relation to the organisation of the science base and its relationships with the Government, industry and the universities. I am happy to say that there has been a pretty united welcome for what we have done.

It is extremely important—I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) is likely to remind me of this, as he did during the preparation of the White Paper—not to devalue the importance of good basic science. I think that he will confirm my understanding that, again and again during consultations, we had from big and small science-based companies a recommendation that the Government should not resile from their proper task of underpinning technology, engineering and the application of science by the provision of that which only they can provide—long-term support to a strong quality science base.

We decided to remove the uncertainty that had remained in relation to the dual funding system since the last higher education White Paper. We have reshaped the research councils, re-endorsing their structure in general and their efficacy. They are a good British invention. They bring peer group pressure to bear effectively and they have been increasingly well managed, although there are further reforms to be made to their management.

We have divided the Science and Engineering Research Council into two and have won general support for that on the grounds that it had become too big and was asked to make judgments that were so wide—between the most cosmological research at one end and the science and engineering underpinning industry at the other that those decisions on allocations should be taken through a process in which Ministers were involved, and by the new director-general whom we shall be establishing.

We have accepted the advice of the Royal Society and others, and of the Labour party on Tuesdays and Thursdays, although not on Wednesdays and Fridays, to bring the Advisory Board for the Research Councils within the Office of Science and Technology. We have won widespread support for that collection of evolutionary but sensible reforms of the management of the science and engineering base.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): The director-general is, probably one of the most important personalities. Does my right hon. Friend have any idea who is likely to be appointed to that post and when he will be in place?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is right to say that his post will be a key to the success of the structure.

Ms Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): His or her.

Mr. Waldegrave: The post should be openly advertised —and the female hon. Member for Redcar is right to correct me, because the holder of that post could be a member of either gender. I will set out at the end of my speech our time scales for some of those matters. I have no idea who will be appointed, but I know—as does my hon. Friend—that a number of high-quality people have expressed interest in the task.

We have won support from some who, in the consultation process, were suspicious that we would get it wrong. Sir John Kingman, vice-chancellor of Bristol university in my constituency—a former chairman of SERC and a distinguished mathematician—upholds the view that the Government should not damage the underlying science base. He comments:

> "The White Paper . . . is the first Government document that comes near to recognising the complexity of the science base, and its relationship to wealth creation, and it says many things about them that badly need to be Government policy. The practical steps outlined in the White Paper are all steps in the right direction. In particular, the changes to the Research Councils and their link with OST seem to me constructive and workable. . . . The White Paper has been rightly welcomed by the scientific community, and you and Bill"—

the chief scientific adviser—

"deserve congratulation."

I greatly value winning support for the reforms from that quarter, as I do the explicit and warm support that we received from Lord Flowers, Chairman of the House of Lords Select Committee.

In a letter, Lord Flowers congratulated us warmly on the White Paper's content and tone and welcomed

"the internalising of the ABRC within OST and the appointment of a Director General".

The judgment of those most closely concerned with the management of the science and engineering base is that our reforms in the structure and organisation of British science were well made and will have the general support of the wider community.

The third theme came across in the consultation most clearly, understandably, from younger scientists and engineers at the bench—that this country has not been very good at managing and giving pastoral care to scientists and engineers in research laboratories. We have increased the numbers markedly over the past 10 or 15 years, but there has been a large increase in the number on short-term contracts. They are not always managed well by the institutions which are their employers—although often they are on contracts to organisations outside the institutions themselves.

After discussions with a wide range of representative institutions and with engineers and scientists at face-to-face meetings in laboratories throughout the country, we reached the conclusions that are set out in the White Paper, which have also been broadly welcomed.

A Government announcement made this week will be welcomed by my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet). My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education announced further support for specialist bursaries for high-quality engineers who want to undertake undergraduate work. That shows that we are beginning to generate much more coherent policy across Government.

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): The criticism is regularly made that the average stipend for a postgraduate is £4,300 per annum, whereas a graduate can earn an average of £16,000. Neither the White Paper nor the Department of Education commented on that aspect. Is not that situation a fundamental flaw?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman knows as well as I that there is no shortage of quality applicants. The counter-criticism is that, if anything, too many people apply for the available places.

The Wellcome Trust and other independent trusts reflect the view that those that we want to keep in the research base must have a sense of longer-term support, particularly when they are older. However, we must not resile from acknowledging that, if we are to do that, in a world in which it is extremely unlikely that there will be large increases in funds, fewer may have to be supported at a better level. The hon. Gentleman may have noticed the letter from Sir Hermann Bondi on that very point published in *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, saying that, if push came to shove, that would be a better way forward.

It is no use opting out and arguing that there must be more money for everything. The Labour party document rather grandly ticked off the science community for asking for more money, saying that it was impertinent of the community to go about its affairs in that way.

Dr. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): It is good to hear of the right hon. Gentleman's concern for scientists, but is it right to accept that the only way forward is to have fewer scientists when we are falling behind our competitors? The White Paper's solutions for dealing with those on short-term contracts involve paying more money, drawing on additional resources to tide people over, and extra fellowships. Is that the right approach when research councils are already unable to support all the alpha projects that seek funding?

Mr. Waldegrave: The Labour party must make up its mind, as must the country, whether the solution to this, as to all other problems, is to spend a great deal more money. We have markedly expanded the total number of post-doctorates aged between 28 and 34 on short-term contracts since the days when Labour was in power. However, there is an unrealistic expectation that they can all remain in the academic base. They cannot and will not —and most likely, they should not. The pyramid must be sharply defined at that stage, because those who are to spend a lifetime in research should be of the highest quality and exhibit the skills required.

The number of people in this free country who choose —no one will stop them—to enter the research base at that point will need greater help and advice to develop their careers. If it is possible—and it is possible—we should continue to direct universities and research councils to imitate the work done by Wellcome and the Royal Society, with Government money, in providing longer-term support for those whom we want to develop and keep in research careers.

It is no use, either, imagining that they can all be kept in the research base. The Association of British Science told me that it was extremely important to have such people in general management, Parliament and the media. They should be given more assistance and pastoral care in finding jobs.

Our proposal relating to the MSC, which was strongly welcomed by Cambridge university—to take one familiar to the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell)—and by Peter Swinnerton-Dyer at Cambridge, identifies the MSC as the natural first part of a postgraduate career, which will enable us to ensure that the council has a slightly wider educational base in relation to management and the research process, so that those who find that they are not to stay for ever in the research base will be equipped with experience that will prove really useful to them in industry.

Mrs. Anne Campbell (Cambridge): Much of the discussion about women in science has been sidelined to a working party, and no mention of that aspect is made in the report. What is the right hon. Gentleman's thinking on stopping women dropping out of science when they have children? Many studies have shown that women drop out then and do not return to the main stream of science, but later end up taking low-skilled, low-grade jobs, which is a great loss to the country.

Mr. Waldegrave: That is a problem. Over the years, evidence has shown that scientists—especially the purists, such as pure mathematicians—are at their most creative at child-bearing age, and it is not easy to reconcile two full-time careers. That is why I set up a committee of women scientists, some of whom—for instance, Dr. Nancy Lane—will be well known to the hon. Lady. I do not want to pre-empt the practical suggestions that the committee will make when it reports in the autumn, but I remain optimistic.

I am thinking back to 20 or 30 years ago, when exactly the same arguments were produced about the impossibility of women working in medicine. That has proved not to be impossible after all: although we have a long way to go before we achieve equality in senior appointments, about 50 per cent. of medical school entrants and doctors in training are women. I believe that the same can be achieved in science and engineering.

I am sure that the House will wish to congratulate Dai Rees, secretary of the Medical Research Council, on his well-deserved knighthood. He described our proposals on the reform of postgraduate education and the management of research staff in universities as sensible.

We are not without power to enforce those proposals: one of the criteria governing the direction of university funding via the higher education funding councils and the research councils will relate to the employment practices of the institutions concerned. The new committee over which the chief scientific adviser will preside is already beginning to meet; the funding councils will meet the research councils to discuss the broad issues of the management of the science base on a systematic basis.

The fourth great theme of the White Paper was the importance of public understanding of science, and of increased work to bridge the cultural divide that, after many years, still exists. Our proposals have been given an enthusiastic welcome by, for example, Sir Arnold Wolfendale, the Astronomer Royal, and COPUS—the Committee on the Public Understanding of Science of the Royal Society—the body which brings together many of the associations involved in the campaign for public understanding of science. COPUS said that it warmly welcomed the emphasis on, and recognition of, the importance of heightening public understanding and awareness of science and technology in the Government's White Paper on science. Sir Walter Bodmer, chairman of COPUS, strongly endorsed that view.

Another endorsement has come from someone very skilled—Neil Cossons, director of the science museum, whose name will be familiar to many hon. Members. He

congratulated the Government on the White Paper, which he considers a significant step forward in the drive to increase the public understanding of science. He wanted to place on record his full support both for the general thrust of the White Paper and for our proposal for a series of mobile exhibitions, culminating in a national exhibition of science at the museum in the year 2001. We shall be asking for the museum's help with our campaign: its staff are internationally recognised as experts.

I have taken some trouble to identify the wide spectrum of support for the proposals in the White Paper. I believe that the Select Committee will find that many of the recommendations in its first report are reflected in our undertakings. I look forward with interest to the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw), who chairs the Committee. We have paid close attention to its recommendations, especially those relating to the role of the OST and the chief scientific adviser. I believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey and the Committee welcomed the raising of the adviser's status; although we should not worry too much about hierarchical points, I considered it a rather odd signal that other scientific advisers in Whitehall should be senior to him. I should add that Bill Stewart himself would be the last person to lobby for such a change.

Although there has been a broad welcome for the theme of the White Paper, there has been criticism of two aspects. Understandably, some have said, "Lots more money would help." Of course it would; that applies to nearly every spending programme. However, the pressure on public expenditure—which all hon. Members know to be real—redoubles the importance of ensuring that the money that we have is spent properly, where it really matters. Britain is not a particularly low spender; we are in the middle of the pack. It is crucial that Government expenditure—which constitutes less than half the spending of the country as a whole—is undertaken in the closest and most productive conjunction with spending by industry.

According to the score board of the Department of Trade and Industry, British companies' spending increased by about £350 million in 1992. The DTI also points out that analysis of the figures reveals a higher percentage increase among the biggest companies—a rise of about 8 per cent., which is comparable with the rest of the world—and a much lower increase among small and medium-sized enterprises. That led the President of the Board of Trade, in his recent reformulation of the direction of his own innovation budget—which, incidentally, has increased by 15 per cent. this year—to concentrate on small and medium-sized enterprises. I am sure that that is a wise priority.

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): Given that our leading companies have done so well, will the right hon. Gentleman tell us how many of them have improved their standing in the world rankings in the past year?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman is right to ask that question. Our long-term task is to enable all our industry to achieve the best. I am sure the hon. Gentleman will agree that some of the industries with which he has been successfully associated in the past are doing very well. Perhaps we quote the views of the pharmaceutical industry too much, but I believe that the relationship between that industry and the scientific and engineering base are good, and should be duplicated elsewhere.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Will the Secretary of State give way? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Waldegrave: I will give way, despite the objections of the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon), the Opposition deputy Chief Whip.

Mr. Wallace: The right hon. Gentleman mentioned the increase in the DTI's innovation funding. No doubt he, like other right hon. and hon. Members, has seen the notes from the Save British Science campaign, which claims that the funds have been cut from £135 million last year to £125 million this year, and that that has been presented as an increase. I am somewhat confused by that figure; can the right hon. Gentleman shed any light on it?

Mr. Waldegrave: The innovation budget has increased by 15 per cent. this year. I do not know where the Save British Science campaign got that figure. The argument that calls for huge new expenditure is a cop-out; we must consider the proper management of the enormous sums that are now being spent.

The other criticism is, in a sense, not a criticism at all. Many people have rightly said that the White Paper is not the end of the story, but the beginning: what matters is how we use the new structures. It is essential that we press on quickly with the implementation. I have set out a clear programme for the establishment of the new arrangements, and the first report of the Technology Foresight programme will be produced by the end of 1994. "Forward Look" will be published each April, starting in 1994. The Director-General for the Research Councils—this meets the point that was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North—will be in place no later than 1 January 1994. The establishment of the six research councils will take effect from 1 April and the publication and dissemination of data on the stocks and flows of scientists and engineers will begin next year.

In one respect, I want to speed things up. I have decided, following discussions with Sir Robin Nicholson, that the next meeting of the Advisory Committee on Science and Technology should be its last and that we should establish the new Council for Science and Technology by the end of October. We should get on with that, as quickly as possible.

In the words of *The Times Higher Education Supplement*,

> "The White Paper is the latest and probably the best attempt to address a key problem about British cultural and economic life, the intellectual distance, and the difference in approach, between our ingenious scientists and engineers and the people who run British companies and British governments."

That is the challenge. We have set a framework, which has been very widely welcomed, and I commend the White Paper, backed, as I believe it is, by the helpful work of the Select Committee.

10.10 am

Ms Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): We welcome the chance to debate science and technology policy. Amazingly, the Chancellor finished with the comment that it is the latest and best attempt to discuss science and technology: in fact, it is the only attempt to discuss science and technology policy for many years. By default, it can certainly be the latest, and possibly the best, attempt.

I was surprised that the Chancellor did not cover an important piece of scientific information that has been in

[Ms Marjorie Mowlam]

the public domain in the last month. It has been discussed in the national press and the Chancellor has written an article on it. A new scientific law has been invented, which the right hon. Gentleman defined as Waldegrave's law. I shall succinctly describe it for hon. Members who have not had the chance to read about it. There is an inverse relationship: the more important the political matter, the less parliamentary time it is given.

Waldegrave's law clearly holds in relation to science and technology policy, which we have not had an opportunity to debate in Government time in the past 14 years. The only debates in 1988, 1989 and 1991 were all as a result——

Mr. Waldegrave: What about 1992?

Ms Mowlam: If we go back a year and a day, the consultation was announced. The substantive debates were all in Labour time. The last debate, which, again, was on a Friday, was introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon).

The Minister said that this is the first realistic attempt at a coherent science policy for 30 years. I would expect him to criticise policy pre-1979. The right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), who spoke in the previous debate, would not be happy with that comment.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am interested in the hon. Lady's first speech on science and technology. It is true that we have to go back nine years to find the last debate that Labour initiated on science and technology. This is the second debate within 12 months that the Government have introduced.

Ms Mowlam: The debate nine years ago was on a balloted motion, but the debates in 1988, 1989 and 1991 were held in Labour time. It is an important point, given the importance that is attached to the issue, but the Minister cannot get away with pretending that his Government have placed emphasis on science and technology in the past 14 years.

In view of the interest that is being shown in the House this morning in science and technology, I should like to deal with a number of points that the Minister made about the White Paper. I welcome some parts of the White Paper, but my worries are shared by much of industry and they concern not what the White Paper contains but what it patently does not contain. We were subjected to quotes for the first 15 minutes of the Minister's speech. Yes, industry welcomes the plus parts, but I can assure hon. Members that it is deeply worried that the White Paper is merely a structure without the meat to deliver.

Let us look at some of the ingredients that are missing, but are necessary to secure the right infrastructure for science and technology. Labour would like to know that science and technology policy is central to the Government's thinking—that it is at the heart of what drives them forward when the economic situation is as bad as the Minister outlined. The timing of the publication of the White Paper showed the importance that the Government attach to science and technology. As everybody knows, it was published on the same day as the Green Paper on road pricing, taking the debate on science, which many hon. Members would have welcomed, out of the press and the media. That shows either incompetence by Government business managers, which is possible, the importance that Government attach to science policy or the Minister's inability to deliver the crucial centrality of science to Government policy.

The second matter lacking from the White Paper is a coherent strategy across Departments. As the Minister said this morning, coherence across different Departments is essential. Our concern is that the Office of Science and Technology is not strong enough to co-ordinate and lead that national strategy. The Minister has often said that we should debate the meat of his proposals, and we are willing to debate our genuine concern that it is not strong enough to play a co-ordinating and leading role.

Does the Office of Science and Technology have sufficient power to meet the objectives of the White Paper? We must accept that power still resides with many individual Departments. We cannot get away from the fact that 60 per cent. of Government spending on science and technology remains with the Departments. Therefore, can the OST perform that role?

Mr. Waldegrave: There is some lack of clarity in Labour policy here. Is the hon. Lady saying that all the science spend should be concentrated in one Department —that the 60 per cent. of the budget for research and development by, for example, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Ministry of Defence should be concentrated in one central Department? *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) is briefing her. I do not think that she means that, but perhaps she would clarify it.

Ms Mowlam: My hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) is whispering in my ear, but I can happily answer the Minister without that. I like my hon. Friend whispering in my ear; it is a very pleasant experience.

The answer to the Minister's question is that we want more co-ordination between Departments. There must be an overview, which is lacking at present. Let us take two Departments to prove my point.

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): Is not the distinction that we have a Cabinet Minister to co-ordinate policy, whereas the shadow science spokesman is not in the shadow Cabinet?

Ms Mowlam: I am responsible for science and technology in the shadow Cabinet. I also shadow the Minister's responsibilities for the civil service, open government and a range of issues. I believe, although it is not often apparent in the Government, that we should delegate and work as a team. We have to ask, if the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) wants to get personal, why the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) left and why he wanted to spend more time on his German lessons than in the Department. We believe in delegation and working together. Yes, there is a voice in the shadow Cabinet on science and technology, but I believe in sharing duties with other Front-Bench colleagues.

A number of Conservative Members nodded in agreement with my point about the Office of Science and Technology. We believe that it should play a co-ordinating and leading role. I do not believe that the White Paper delivers that. The Ministry of Defence is a prime example. There is no mention of "Forward Look" in the White

Paper's chapter on the Ministry of Defence. The Government have said that there will be a Government strategy for the better utilisation of defence research and development and for diverting resources from defence to increased civilian spend.

Where is that in the White Paper? Of the many Government documents I have read, the section dealing with the Ministry of Defence strikes me as a blatant example of the Ministry of Defence parachuting in the paragraphs that it wants, without the co-ordination and lead that we had hoped would be forthcoming from the Minister responsible for the OST.

The Minister said that he has ensured greater co-ordination between Departments. In that connection, the LINK programme is emphasised in the White Paper. Supposedly, it has increased the responsibility of the OST by being moved from the DTI. The OST should be undertaking such co-ordination, but, if we examine the detail of the White Paper, it becomes clear that the programme still reports jointly to the two Departments. That is another example of the OST not having the power or bottle. If the Minister doubts that, I refer him to a written question on Wednesday. The answer states:

"The Department of Trade and Industry, like other participating Departments, uses money from its overall research and development budget to support LINK programmes and projects where these provide a way of meeting departmental objectives."—[*Official Report*, 16 June 1993; Vol. 226, c. *583*.]

Clearly, the administration has come to the OST, but the meat of the project remains with the DTI. There are many bold statements in the White Paper, but none of the necessary mechanisms. In that sense, it is not really a White Paper because it does not contain the necessary mechanisms to deliver the science and technology policy that we all want.

As the Minister is not happy with that argument, I cite another example to support my point. Let us consider Technology Foresight. As I said, we welcome many parts of the White Paper, and the Technology Foresight programme is one of them. We are pleased that the practices followed by our technologically advanced companies, which are already followed by our competitors, are to become part of our forward planning. We are also pleased that the Government have got out of the ideological cleft stick of believing that such a programme would be seen as picking winners. I am pleased that the Minister has managed to jump that hurdle and is satisfied that Technology Foresight will point the way forward for industry.

The Government's problem with Technology Foresight is that, although many reports will be circulated, having Technology Foresight will not in itself deliver the necessary changes. We need mechanisms to involve industry to ensure that new technologies will result, but they are lacking. Although, because of time constraints, I do not want to get involved in arguments about why the public sector borrowing requirement is so high or about the economic problems that the Government have created, I accept what the Minister said. We are not arguing that a great deal more money needs to be thrown at the problem, but unless we resource and fund development programmes, what is the point of having Technology Foresight? Without the necessary funding and the mechanisms to involve industry to ensure that the new technologies are delivered, Technology Foresight will do nothing more than circulate good ideas.

It may be apposite to remind the House that while the Chancellor was launching Technology Foresight on the country, the President of the Board of Trade was closing the advanced technology programmes that were supposed to develop the technologies of the future. Is that Technology Foresight in practice?

What new technologies does the aerospace industry think are required? It produced a report calling on the Government to support some joint technological ventures. The DTI response was to ignore and suppress the report. We welcome the general ideas, but we are worried that the OST lacks influence and that the mechanisms do not exist to develop those ideas.

I believe that the same problem applies to the section of the White Paper dealing with near-market research. Submission after submission to the Chancellor during the consultation period called for a change of heart on near-market research. I think that it was Sir John Fairclough, the architect of the policy, who eventually acknowledged that it had not been working all along.

What does the White Paper say about near-market research? Paragraph 2.20 states:

"the Government recognises that circumstances can arise where market forces do not work in a satisfactory manner".

At least we have got that clear; the market alone cannot deliver. Paragraph 2.22 tells us that there is a general presumption that near-market work will continue to be funded by the private sector, but, where that approach breaks down, careful account must be taken

"of the circumstances of each individual case."

I should have more faith in the Government's ability to make a commitment to near-market research if the Chancellor made it clear who or what would be funded. The White Paper presents no criteria.

We and industry need to know whether there will be any avenues of support from the Chancellor's office or from the DTI for near-market research and development other than existing schemes or, as with Technology Foresight, are we to have only window dressing rather than the concrete specifics that will make a difference to science and technology?

I deal now with the advisory bodies announced in the White Paper and which the Minister dealt with this morning, and especially the roles of the Advisory Council on Science and Technology and the Advisory Board for the Research Councils. He said that ACOST is to be replaced by a Council for Science and Technology chaired by the Chancellor, and ABRC is to be wound up and subsumed into the OST. Before the Chancellor says, as he tried to do earlier, that that is what the Labour party wants, let me make it clear to him what changes we believe would have been workable and, in view of the Minister's "open government", would have been more successful in informing the scientific community and others.

ACOST often criticised the Government because it recognised the limits that the Government put on the future of science in this country. What was the Government's response? They internalised the committee and put the Minister in the chair. Ministers disliked the ABRC because it criticised the level of spending on the science base, and the Chancellor's predecessors suppressed some of its reports because they did not like the tone. What happened to the two committees? The ABRC is to be replaced by a Director-General of Research Councils and his expert group of external advisers. The Minister has gone from accountability to anonymity in one leap.

[Ms Mowlam]

We want a solution offering a bit of both worlds. We happily acknowledge that the ABRC needs to be abolished because resource allocation should be carried out internally, but the role of the Council for Science and Technology should be to make recommendations on the science budget to the OST and to hold the Chancellor and the director-general accountable for their actions. That cannot be done by a council to be chaired by the Chancellor himself. It is the lack of openness which worries us. If some hon. Members want to check, I refer them to Wednesday's edition of *Hansard*. In column *608* of the written answers, it is made clear that the Minister will not encourage the necessary openness.

The part of the document dealing with international subscriptions was also welcomed by the sections of industry listed by the Minister. However, the White Paper must be read carefully at this stage. We are told that the Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council will

"not have to cope entirely within its own grant-in-aid with short term variations in international subscriptions."

We welcome that, because short-term variations and currency fluctuations are a problem. It becomes clear from a closer reading of the document, however, that that will apply not just to one committee but to the entire set-up. In future, therefore, when the Government's economic policy goes awry, the whole scientific community—rather than just one committee, as in the past—will be angry. Many in the scientific community will not welcome that development.

The Opposition have long regarded the attitude to European Community funding as scandalous. This is another respect in which the Minister and the OST are not strong enough to deliver the kind of future that we seek for science and technology. The dead hand of the Treasury is very much in evidence in the relevant part of the White Paper:

"The system of attributing the cost of Community expenditure to Departments has given Departments a clear incentive to seek value for money from Community programmes."

We are interested in getting value for money from different programmes, but the practice of attribution has been universally condemned because it has removed much of the added value that could be gained from the finance from European programmes. The White Paper's reference to attribution will clearly please those who are worried about what the Chief Secretary to the Treasury will do, but if we are seeking value for money from the available financial resources for scientific programmes for the good of the future of science and the nation, this is not the way to achieve it.

I shall not go into the question of PhDs and MSCs in view of the time and the number of hon. Members wishing to speak. I am sure that others will touch on that subject.

The Minister referred to the importance of university education. In addition to 18 to 24-year-olds, however, we must consider those who are still at school. As part of the changes in the national curriculum announced by the Secretary of State for Education recently, it is proposed to remove technology from the list of foundation subjects that are subject to testing—simply because the quality of technology tests has been criticised and because they have been likened to what happens on "Blue Peter" with toilet rolls, egg cartons and the like.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): The hon. Lady is denigrating engineering.

Ms Mowlam: I am certainly not denigrating engineering. I am questioning the Government's ability to develop an education and testing programme for technology. The Opposition support such testing at age 14, although we do not wish the results to be made public. The Government have been sharply criticised for their lack of ability to deliver decent educational standards for the benefit of our country's children. If we are to prosper in 10, 20 or 30 years' time, our schools must provide the kind of training that will excite children, while giving them a scientific base. In his decision, the Secretary of State for Education has acknowledged the Government's inability to deliver on that.

I shall not refer in detail to privatisation and market testing, except to say that there will be problems if the Minister continues market testing of the kind that has been used so far in research departments in the civil service without stopping to think what the outcome will be. We have asked for a moratorium on market testing for the simple reason that it is driven by the desire to produce results rather by an interest in the future quality of scientific research. I hope that the Minister will have the intelligence to say, "Let us stop and evaluate what has happened. Don't let us go hell for leather." If he does not, he will ultimately destroy much of our scientific base.

The Labour party is fortunate enough to be represented in this place by a number of women and I am sure that, if they catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my hon. Friends will seek to speak about women in science.

I am happy to welcome the positive aspects of the White Paper, but, as I hope I have shown today, a detailed examination of the document reveals a number of faults and weaknesses, which result, first, from a lack of power and cohesion in the OST and from the Minister's inability to co-ordinate across the Departments and, secondly, from the fact that the Treasury vetoes actions that would improve the position of science and technology. It is a combination of those factors which makes parts of the White Paper weak.

There can be no clearer illustration of the problem than the recently announced closure of the Warren Spring environmental technology laboratory. We have talked about "Forward Look" and about Technology Foresight. Will the Government's forward look really reveal that we need less research into the environment? Will technology forecasts say that environmental technology will not be a growth area in Britain in future? We must look not only at what the Government are saying but at what they are doing. The reality is that the DTI budget has been squeezed so far that it now has no choice but to destroy its own science and technology infrastructure—and there is nothing that the Minister or the OST can do to stop that.

The White Paper makes great play of the words "realising our potential". We should remember that the verb "to realise" has two meanings: it means "to understand" and it means "to achieve". After the long consultation period and the production of the White Paper, our understanding may be greater, which I welcome, but, for the reasons that I have given this morning, I fear that there will be a failure to achieve. That will be bad for the future development of Britain.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): There are three hours 55 minutes available for the rest of the debate and no fewer than 21 hon. Members are hoping to catch my eye. I hope that those who are called early in the debate will bear that in mind.

10.36 am

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): I am grateful for this opportunity to take part in the debate as Chairman of the Select Committee on Science and Technology, and I thank my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House for agreeing to arrange the debate early, and before too much time has elapsed following the publication of the White Paper.

Let me express my appreciation to my colleagues on the Select Committee on Science and Technology for allowing me to chair that Committee and for allowing us to produce a report in record time—as we did last autumn—to add to the discussion about the White Paper on science and technology. Sadly, I speak as a non-scientist—a matter of great regret to the members of my Committee, I understand. I have spent about 19 years in manufacturing industry, however, and can therefore claim that there will be some connection between my remarks and relevant experience. When the Committee prepared the report, we were dealing with proposals relating to the White Paper that we are now debating. We offer our approval to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster for much of what he has done, but on other matters we remain critical and unconvinced.

I am delighted to follow the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam). The hon. Gentleman——

Ms Mowlam: Lady.

Sir Giles Shaw: What a terrible thing my lack of science is, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Lady was being a little hard when she said that the publication of the White Paper could be taken as proof positive of the actions that would follow. She and I know that new policy directions outlined in White Papers are in practice never embarked on without further changes and further pressures. I assure the hon. Lady that, on many of the issues that we are discussing today, the Select Committee will act as a careful and critical observer of what happens and will push and shove to try to ensure that some of the developments that the hon. Lady rightly seeks come to pass. I am sure that that is what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster would expect.

Changes to the advisory bodies—the Advisory Committee on Science and Technology and the Advisory Board for the Research Councils—have been recommended by many organisations, including my Committee. We welcome the proposals in the White Paper setting up the Council for Science and Technology. I do not share the anxiety expressed by the hon. Member for Redcar about the fact that it will be chaired by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. I regard my right hon. Friend's position in the Department as central if the Government are committed to raising the profile of science in the Government. That will strengthen the position of the policies that flow from the Government. We will be looking with great interest, as will outsiders, at the membership of the council and how that membership will be distributed between the various parties that must be positioned within it.

With regard to the reorganisation of the research councils, there is a general feeling among many organisations that the structure and mission of the councils need changing. My Committee recommended that the concept of a mission-oriented research council should be more fully debated, that missions should be more fully worked out and the cost-benefit studies carried through.

Frankly, it does not surprise me that there has been no opportunity for as rigorous an investigation as we might have hoped for during the preparation of the White Paper. However, I welcome the changes and I strongly hope that, when they are speedily established—my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster announced that they would be established very speedily—there will be a period of stability for the new system to allow it to take root and to flourish effectively.

I believe that Technology Foresight is probably one of the most important initiatives—albeit belatedly in relation to the United Kingdom—for the Government to undertake. Many people believe that the Government's efforts to support winners in science and technology are not always the best ideas. That is clear from projects such as Comet and TSR2. However, a co-ordinated programme of research foresight technology to select future generic technologies to make them applicable across a number of scientific disciplines is surely a very welcome step and one which many of our main competitors, particularly America and Germany, have used extensively for many years.

Research foresight activity on its own is not enough. Using findings in industry to make new and better products ahead of the competition is surely the key to wealth creation. I suspect that my Select Committee will want to monitor those developments extremely carefully to relate them to the actuality of the technology produced and, one hopes, see real improvements in competitiveness in our economy.

I want now to consider the "Forward Look". The preparation by the Office of Science and Technology of an annual "Forward Look", which greatly extends the scope of the current annual review of Government funded R and D, will provide more openness and will allow us to judge the OST and the policy that it pursues. Any Select Committee would welcome that degree of commitment by the Department that it is technically monitoring on behalf of the House. I believe that that will be one of the key changes that the Select Committee will want to expand and explore in the years to come.

Whether the policy will be implemented effectively will, of course, depend on the Department's willingness to comply. In that regard, I believe that one of the key points that I share with the hon. Gentleman, the hon. Member for Redcar—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry, the hon. Lady. I suppose that I score zero in the attainment test: eight for creative expression and zero for technical experience.

The important point is whether the policy to which I referred will be implemented effectively. The willingness to comply will be the crucial factor. There is anxiety because the way in which the Government's research is departmentalised at the moment will continue uninfluenced. However, I set considerable store by the co-ordinated regime set in place under the chief scientific officer, whose upgrading the Committee recommended and whose appointment I am pleased to welcome. In addition, I place considerable emphasis on the way in

[Sir Giles Shaw]

which, when these isues are debated, there will be genuine priorities that will be genuinely agreed and which will stick.

If that happens, I believe, unlike the hon. Member for Redcar, that that will lead to genuine prioritisation within the Office of Science and Technology. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is aware, my Committee was clearly of the opinion that ultimately there should be a Ministry for Science which would develop and produce policy and outline and implement policy for the scientific and technological development of this country.

Education is obviously a huge theme in any discussion of science and technology. The White Paper's recognition of the critical importance of education and training is greatly welcomed. In my Committee's interview recently with expert witnesses, education and training of young people below university standard was revealed to be the area which gives major cause for concern. It affects the ability of companies to accommodate changes in work practice to take into account new technologies with the same speed and flexibility as their overseas competitors. A very close eye must be kept on the way in which education in science and technology delivers the goods, and I am sure that my Committee will do that.

I suspect that defence R and D is the biggest problem with which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has to deal, and I know that he is a man of considerable patience. It is clear from the White Paper that although the words may be useful and amiable in their way, they do not betoken a significant shift of defence R and D to civil expenditure. Defence R and D is the greatest recipient of Government research funding at the moment and we have suffered, along with America and France, in relation to the amount of civil funding compared with that in Japan and Germany, which have negligible defence R and D.

On a global scale, the ending of the cold war must be the biggest influence on the way in which the structure and organisation of science and technology investment can now be changed. The demand for defence-specific R and D in the west is certain to fall and the United Kingdom will be no exception. That reduction should not be seen as an opportunity to reduce total Government spending. Instead, the funding must be transferred to civil R and D.

Furthermore, defence R and D should, unless there are cogent reasons against it, be designed with spin-off and spin-in measures with civil activity as a key purpose. I hope that the OST will look closely at that. Sadly, although the White Paper recognises that aim, it does not provide the OST with any control in that respect and it relies heavily on the co-operation of the Ministry of Defence. I expect that my Committee will look at that aspect very keenly in the years to come.

Innovation is surely the key to wealth creation in this country; it has been the subject of a House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology and it is a key component of my Committee's investigations. Without effective innovation, no amount of research foresight activity, international collaboration or other activities described in the White Paper will lead to the creation of wealth, which is absolutely essential to our future.

Japan has few basic research achievements if one considers the number of Nobel prizes that Japan has won. However, Japan has been inordinately successful in exploiting technology and creating wealth. As my right hon. Friend will know, my Committee is currently investigating the way in which the science base may be translated into competitive and innovative technology and we will be visiting Japan later in the year. Information to date leads to the view that there is an endemic problem in our education, training and culture which must be addressed.

The Committee recommended that it would be appropriate for the OST to have an overview of schemes intended to encourage innovation in industry to ensure that Departments worked to common policies and that all schemes were part of a coherent framework for providing industry support. I urge the importance of that activity and hope that there will be close co-operation between all the Departments concerned. We recommended that the OST and the Department of Trade and Industry should work to ensure that the near-market policy on research funding is re-examined. Reference has already been made to that and we welcome the signs that that policy will be relaxed. We welcome even more the evidence that it has been relaxed.

In respect of R and D funding, few would argue with the basic proposition that investment in science ultimately creates wealth. It is, therefore, becoming more apparent that wealth is often a precondition for that investment. The oft-lamented view that the United Kingdom does not invest enough in R and D is not just a problem for consideration by the Government alone; it should also be considered by industry. Of estimated United Kingdom civil research funding in 1990 of £9·4 billion, just under 60 per cent. was funded by industry and 28 per cent. by the Government. That figure for industry compares with 60 per cent. in Germany, 70 per cent. in Japan—the highest of any nation—and 40 per cent. in France.

While we have our current public sector borrowing requirement problems, it is unlikely that significant additional Government funding of civil research will be forthcoming. However, we must ensure that savings in defence R and D are transferred to the civil side. At the same time, industry must be encouraged to increase its expenditure and the City and shareholders must be pressed to face up to the importance of such expenditure to companies and, thus, to the country. Sadly, no action is proposed on that in the White Paper. What is needed now is a follow-up to the White Paper which considers industry and sources of finance and the investigations that my Committee might undertake to ensure that there are proper routes by which long-term funding can be directed towards industrial development in R and D.

On the international side, the extent to which the same new or generic technologies are reflected in each country's list of priorities is remarkable. Together with the significant levels of investment often required in setting up research facilities, that means that collaborative research is increasingly taking place, and I welcome that. That may involve the setting up of common facilities like CERN or the European bio-information institute which we are pleased to see will be located here, or it may just involve collaboration between organisations in different countries, as happens in the framework programme.

Whatever the situation, the OST must ensure that the interests of the United Kingdom are fully reflected in such collaborative projects, that United Kingdom organisations are aware of and fully participate in such projects,

whether or not the United Kingdom is directly involved. We must take every opportunity to host international scientific facilities when they are germane to United Kingdom interests. Although the Economic Community is a prime region for collaboration, we should not neglect opportunities with other countries.

We are pleased that the dual funding policy is to continue. We consider it important, as do our colleagues on the House of Lords Select Committee, that universities continue to be regarded as whole institutions.

Let me refer to one or two broader themes. It is widely recognised that the United Kingdom's science base is competitive and internationally respected; indeed, our clutch of Nobel prizes are strong, but it is a fact that the tendons of technology are less well developed for a major industrial economy such as ours. I respect the view that manufacturing industry itself must be the lead influence for turning science into innovative technology. Customer pull, in the jargon of marketing, must be the preferred route.

There is no denying that for long periods there has been industrial decline in this country. The 19th century smoke-stack industries became obsolete, or failed to generate funds for investment, or failed in the free competition that faced them, or failed when imperial markets disappeared, or failed in countless recessions or economic difficulties, or failed when those who owned or managed them had not the talent so to do—a whole range of reasons, a whole range of excuses. That has passed. But with the demise, our industrial culture also departed. To revive our industrial culture must be our first priority. It starts with education. How we welcome the development, albeit belatedly again, of a proper design and technology and science and technology base for all children passing through our education stream.

The emphasis must shift back towards the importance of industry in general and the making of things in particular. The link between the creation of new materials and products on the one hand and the creation of wealth on the other hand must also be re-established. We must lift, too, the status of our engineers and our producers, as they do in Germany. The belief that "profit" is a dirty word must give way to the recognition that risk should be rewarded and that commercial success in the marketplace has to be applauded.

I am glad that non-vocational qualifications and the various derivatives therefrom are being rapidly developed to stand alongside other academic qualifications. Let us never forget that small or medium-sized enterprises will be looking to schools rather than to universities to provide the skills that they need to make things happen in the marketplace.

If we are serious, too, about regaining the jobs that were so tragically lost by recession in recent years, the creation of new small businesses is much more likely to help than the expansion of larger ones when it comes to a decision on increasing jobs. New investment in new technology in large companies is frequently based on a reduction in manning levels. The preferable basis for a decision to invest in new manufacturing technology is to add values to the product and to improve quality for the consumer. Ultimately, science and technology must be judged as ingredients—important, but ingredients only—in improving consumer satisfaction. It is the consumer in the marketplace who ultimately determines all commercial success. Any restoration of our industrial culture and any improvement in our technology must be matched, too, by an improvement in our capacity to market products effectively.

The White Paper is forward looking. I trust that it will be a catalyst for change to help to secure Britain's place in the intensely competitive and challenging environment in which our future lies.

10.53 am

Mr. Gordon Oakes (Halton): I warmly welcome what the hon. Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) has said. I agree with almost every word, and I applaud the way in which he delivered his sentiments. Whether or not the hon. Gentleman has scientific qualifications, the Select Committee on Science and Technology is in very safe hands if speeches of that calibre emanate from its Chairman.

As the hon. Gentleman said, this subject is absolutely vital to the future of our nation. Look at Britain—we are a small, fairly overcrowded island, and we have few, if any, natural resources. However, we have the skill and inventiveness of our people. The White Paper might further enhance and co-ordinate the inventiveness of our people.

If this matter is the Government's top priority—the Secretary of State indicated that it was—why, oh why, have this debate on a Friday? Friday is the only working day of the week when hon. Members can have contact with their constituencies. They need to be either in their constituencies or on their way to them on Fridays. Twenty-one hon. Members are present on a Friday—probably the highest attendance ever on a Friday for non-Maastricht business—in order to contribute to the debate. I should have thought that we could have had prime time for such an important subject.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam), I agree with much of what is in the White Paper, but I am worried about its implementation. The White Paper says all the right things—some of them new, some of them pious—with which few people could disagree, but how will it be implemented? As my hon. Friend asked, where is the co-ordination between Departments?

What happens when there are breakthroughs in science and engineering, particularly engineering? We are a nation of inventors—look at the number of Nobel prizes that this small country wins, and, in particular, at the pharmaceutical industry and the number of lives that have been saved because of inventions in this country. How often are British inventions developed abroad? The White Paper does not address that problem. The Secretary of State might say that that is a problem for the Department of Trade and Industry—indeed it is—but I want co-ordination.

The fault lies not with our scientific research, our inventors or even our company managements, but largely with the banks. The banks cannot see further than their noses or further than a week's profit. When something is invented or a breakthrough occurs, the company and inventor concerned want to develop it in this country, but they cannot do so because of a lack of funding from our banks. No country—certainly not the United States, Japan or most of our European competitors—would allow

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brilliant inventions and breakthroughs to be developed in other countries. The list is endless, as all hon. Members know.

Did the Secretary of State have discussions with, or make representations to, his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health when the limited list was considered? There is no doubt that if the limited list is accepted in the form in which it was proposed, it will kill stone dead research in the pharmaceutical industry, one of our most profitable industries.

When the limited list was introduced in such a rough-handed way, in every sphere in which it applied, research and development were stopped in the relevant branch of medicine. The Association of British Pharmaceutical Industry spells that out in detail in an advertisement in *The House magazine*.

I am not saying that cuts do not have to be made in drug expenditure—they do. However, there are other ways to tackle it. I hope that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancanster, who has special responsibility for science and technology, will have a word with the Secretary of State for Health and say, "Look what you will do to research in the pharmaceutical industry if you proceed in that way."

My hon. Friend the Member for Redcar mentioned the fact that no extra money will emanate from the White Paper, especially with regard to defence. Of course, defence expenditure will decrease. Thank God it will. It was bound to decrease, because our biggest defence threat is rapidly disappearing. We still need forces, but we do not need the same amount of research that we had at one time because of the sophisticated equipment that our potential enemies might have had. Where has the money gone? There will be a net loss to research and development when the defence budget is reduced.

I quote from a briefing document from the Save British Science campaign that puts the matter excellently and more succinctly than I could:

"The MoD is the government's biggest spender on R and D, a massive £2·6 billion p.a. But it has clearly kept a considerable distance from the White Paper and has contributed nothing of significance to the overall approach.

There are no plans, similar to those for example in the USA, to employ MoD facilities to aasist industry of the S and EB.

None of the past reduction of defence R and D expenditure, now about £0·6 billion less p.a., has been transferred of civil R and D."

That is a glaring omission from the White Paper—it has not been properly tackled. The funding that has hitherto gone to research and development will be lost for ever.

I have another concern—it is a niggling point because, obviously, my base is on the chemistry side of research and development. There is considerable concern in the Chemical Industries Association and the Royal Society of Chemistry about the way in which some of the funds and research councils are being set up, which could act to the detriment of chemistry as a subject.

I quote from an excellent document produced by Mr. Stephen Benn of the Royal Society of Chemistry:

"For example, take the case of biological organic chemistry which is crucial to the new developments in the pharmaceutical industry. The Society is concerned that funding for this important and exciting new area will fall between two stools. Why? Because (a) the Chemistry Committee (or equivalent) of the new EPSRC will not fund such research on the grounds that it seems like biology; (b) The new BBSRC will also not fund this work because they will give preference (naturally enough) to more obvious biological research. In summary: while biologists have three RCs to approach for funding . . . and physicists have two RCs . . . chemistry is in danger of not having one single obvious RC to call 'home'."

That is a real problem. I hope that the Royal Society of Chemistry will be one of the organisations that sit on the advisory bodies as it can give invaluable independent advice to central Government.

Environmental research will probably replace defence research at the top of our agenda. Environmental research is a new frontier science, because, if we are to advance as a nation with the standard of comfort to which we are accustomed, the only sphere of activity that can clean up the planet are those who have polluted it. The only salvation for this country—or, indeed, the world—lies in what our chemical industry can do to redress the imbalance of the past and ensure that it does not happen again.

I am proud of ICI in my constituency and its research and development. I am proud of the fact that it developed an ozone-friendly substance called KLEA which does not contain chlorofluorocarbons. The company has had nothing but coals heaped on its head after spending £100 million and making a breakthrough that led the world. Greenpeace still attacks it, and says that the substance is not the answer. I do not know what Greenpeace wants instead of KLEA.

That is an example of a company spending a vast amount of resources, making the breakthrough and producing the substance in my constituency across the river at Runcorn but getting nothing but abuse for its activities. We must stop behaving in that silly way towards our industries and criticising them.

I have so much that I want to say, but many hon. Members on both sides of the House wish to speak. I do not want to be accused of abusing my position as a Privy Councillor by giving a long speech or being called early in the debate. I agree with what the White Paper says about the importance of science education at an early age: it is an age-old problem. In those far-off days before 1979 when we had a Labour Government, I was the Minister of State responsible for higher education and science. At that time, the problem had been there for 20 or 30 years and it is still there now. It is not a party-political problem.

The problem is the lack of attention that is given to science as it is pushed lower down the curriculum in our schools and the preference that many of us and the media have for the arts. People will look at a cathedral, say that it is a wonderful structure and ask: "How could the mind of man devise this?" They never look at a machine in that way, yet it is just as important as far as the practical lives of people are concerned.

We should face the fact that science is more difficult at examination level. Science subjects are more difficult than the arts and that deters some people. Science costs more. Certainly, the higher one goes up the scale, the more a science degree costs, compared to an arts degree. That may be a deterrent to hard-pressed local authorities, hard-pressed opt-out schools, and so on. They will clip the money available for science, because it is expensive.

The real problem does not lie with science teaching, or lack of it. It lies with another subject—mathematics. We cannot have an innumerate scientist, whether it is archaeology, astronomy or zoology and right through the gamut of the sciences. If a youngster does not have a

mathematical base, he can never become a scientist or an engineer. It is important that although the White Paper stresses science, it does not stress mathematics sufficiently. People who want to become scientists but do not have that mathematical foundation are doomed to failure, because they cannot advance in their subject.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the new system of university funding, which effectively downgrades mathematics compared with other practical science subjects, is damaging the provision of mathematicians and, ultimately, our science base?

Mr. Oakes: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. It was bad enough before—as my hon. Friend rightly said, it is now going in the wrong direction altogether.

This subject is not a party-political one—it is too important. As I said at the outset, it is vital to the whole future of this nation. It is essential if we are to create jobs. But it is more than that. If we are to keep the jobs we have at present, there must be a co-ordinated foundation of research in science and engineering.

When the Minister sets up the research councils and undertakes his future activities in Cabinet, I beg him to fight his ministerial colleagues for science and research development and not let them blindly damage the structure of research and development, whether it is the Ministry of Defence, the Department of Health or any other Government Department. I urge him to fight for the future foundations of science in this country.

11.9 am

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage): For me it is a welcome coincidence that this debate comes so soon after I left the Department dealing with the issues that we are discussing today. Ex-Ministers retain some relevant inside knowledge of their former Department for perhaps a month after leaving it, so I am still just within my sell-by date. I assure my right hon. and hon. Friends that I do not intend to follow recent precedent and turn what I have to say into any sort of personal statement. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis), who has taken over from me as Parliamentary Secretary to the Office of Public Service and Science. I hope that he enjoys, in his first departmental office, what Macaulay described as

"that closely watched slavery that is mocked by the name of Power."

I was pleased to have had the opportunity to take part in the discussion within the Government that led up to the publication last month of the White Paper on science and technology. I shall always remember with special pleasure and real affection the officials and leading scientists with whom I was privileged to work.

I want to speak essentially about the Government's role in general support for science and technology, especially through the research councils. Another large topic concerns the role of Departments as customers for research, upon which I hope that the House will be allowed to have a debate in good time for the conclusion of the further review that is announced in the White Paper. Many constituencies will be affected, and hon. Members should have an opportunity to consider the issues.

The White Paper embodies a carefully constructed balance between what are perceived to be two distinct concerns: the concern that Government support for science should be directed to the most intellectually significant work; and the concern that the public funds devoted to science should show demonstably useful returns for the people of the country, especially in terms of wealth creation.

The House will notice that I say that those two concerns are "perceived" to be distinct. That is certainly, I am afraid, the case within Whitehall. In my experience, however—my right hon. Friend reported this in his opening speech—the more informed and far-sighted industrialists recognise that the best way for the Government to support wealth creation is for them to nourish the science base and the ideas and highly trained people that it produces.

The main message that I want to leave with the House is that it is critical that, in the implementation of the White Paper policies, a proper balance should be maintained between those two concerns.

It is important that Government spending on science and technology should have a clear, easily recognised and explained rationale. Otherwise, matters that should be treated on a long-term basis will be overwhelmed by the whims of Whitehall fashion, or lost to sight in the all-too-brief half-life of the passing parade of Ministers.

It is also important to recognise that, while the role of Government in support of science is of critical importance, it is, inevitably and necessarily, a limited role. Putting on one side, for another occasion I hope, the question of how Departments should manage the direct procurement of science for their departmental purposes, the central role of Government in supporting science and technology, as the White Paper clearly argued in chapter 3, is to remedy what economic analysis identifies as a "market failure" in research and development.

Fundamental, speculative science and strategic generic science and technology are necessary for the progress of any science-based economy. As the White Paper clearly says, because of the speculative nature of that work, the long lead time involved and the inescapable openness of most research involving academics, market-orientated operators cannot be expected to fund that kind of work in any comprehensive or reliable manner. The essential role of the Government in supporting science is to fill that gap.

It must not, however, be the role of the Government to second-guess business in respect of the application of R and D to commercial ventures. Paragraph 2.20 of the White Paper makes the point clearly that the Government are not equipped to make commercial decisions. More fundamentally, the effect of too much Government involvement in business decisions about R and D is to diminish the sense of responsibility for R and D within business.

One of the most hopeful achievements of the 1980s, making for greater competitiveness in British business, was the growing recognition in our boardrooms that such matters as R and D and training are too important to be left to the Government. I hope that we will do nothing in the 1990s to undermind that dawning enlightenment.

One of the reasons, above all, why the Government must limit their aspirations in the matter of supporting R and D for business is, quite simply, that the resources that the Government have available for general support for science and technology are, regrettably, extremely limited. The scale of investment required for R and D for business

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in a science-based economy quite simply dwarfs the resources that are allocated in general support for science by the Government.

Moreover, it is a simple fact that, in an economy whose leading companies are more and more global in their scale and aspirations, the name of the game in R and D has long ceased to be to exploit the intellectual resources of only one country.

If it is true that the Government's investment in general support for science is simply too small to have much leverage upon R and D for business, it is also true, however, that those limited funds are already more than overstretched in fulfilling what I have described as the central role for the Government in this matter—support for fundamental and strategic science.

The bottom line, as they say, is that any significant shift of Government R and D funding to support what are taken to be business objectives will, in the first place, never be enough to make much difference to business and, secondly, could have potentially catastrophic effects upon the availability of resources for basic and strategic science.

To be more concrete, let me give some figures to illustrate what I mean. Twenty per cent. of the annual research councils' budget amounts to some £240 million. That sum equates to no more than 4 per cent. of the estimated annual spend by British industry on R and D. Yet that £240 million covers just about the whole of the cost of the Medical Research Council, on which we spend currently £257 million, or it equates to the cost of supporting all the work done in astronomy and particle physics, at a cost of £190 million, together with the whole of the sum devoted to the Economic and Social Research Council—£53 million.

I have spoken of the White Paper as embodying a carefully calculated balance between the concern for good science and the concern for wealth creation. I hope that what I have said so far explains why that balance is important. Now let me say something about some of the critical points on which the maintenance of that balance will depend and concerning which I believe that the House would be right to exercise great vigilance. I hope and believe that the Select Committee on Science and Technology will play a leading role in that.

First of all, and perhaps most fundamental, there is the question of the balance between OPSS-funded activities and those funded by other Departments, notably by the Department of Trade and Industry. I regret that the White Paper was unable to furnish evidence of a conclusive understanding on that point.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will pay close attention to decisions taken by other Departments that might create pressures for compensating activity on his part. I hope that neither he nor the research councils will feel it necessary to divert their efforts to make good gaps that may be created by decisions, especially the unilateral decisions, of other Departments.

Next, there is the question of the general direction of the research councils, which has already been mentioned today, and on which I received a reassuring answer from my right hon. Friend at Question Time recently. My right hon. Friend recognises that he assumed a great responsibility when he persuaded the Prime Minister to create a Ministry for science. That major step towards centralisation has had the inevitable consequence of the end of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils—the ABRC—as a quasi-executive body, at arm's length from the Government, operating as a buffer between them and the research councils.

The role played by the ABRC is now to be played within OPSS by the Director-General for Research Councils. It is critical that the person filling that position should understand the world of fundamental science, and that he or she should have an understanding of the role that reflects the rationale for research council funding and the balances that are set forth in the research White Paper.

Each individual research council has a new mission statement, promulgated, no doubt constitutionally, in the White Paper. Those mission statements are carefully balanced, along the lines that I have described. It is critical that the new chairmen of the research councils, drawn as they all will be from business, should honour that balance, together with their council and chief executives. I hope that they will never be allowed to forget that they are independent organisations operating under royal charters, not Departments or dependencies of the Government. Their accountability is essentially for how they spend the money allocated to them, not for what they spend it on within the terms of their charters.

One of the White Paper's welcome features is the creation of the new Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council, which should help to sustain support for the important fundamental sciencies by reducing the extent of direct competition for their funding with other research council activities. However, it is essential that the words of the White Paper and the new mission statements about the continuing responsibility for basic science of all the research councils should be respected. The PPARC must not be allowed to become an alibi for a general retreat from fundamental science.

Another key point of balance relates to universities. The White Paper proposes to retain the dual support system. I am glad about that, because, within reason, decentralisation and pluralism and the multiplicity of decision centres are necessary for success in supporting speculative science. But it is important to emphasise two implications of retaining the dual support system which are not sufficiently recognised in the White Paper.

First, because they constitute only one side of the dual support system, the research councils cannot develop new funding policies without reference to the universities. The university research economy depends on inputs from the research councils and, because of the limited funds available for those purposes, even a quite small redirection of research council funding could have serious effects on research in universities. That is another point of balance which will need careful watching.

There is a second and wider issue relating to the dual support system, which involves the new machinery for co-ordinating research councils and higher education funding councils described in the White Paper. Just as the balance in the White Paper between concern for scientific excellence and concern for science and technology in support of business must be carefully honoured and respected, so the same balance must be reflected in the working of the university side of the dual support system.

While it is a vulgar category mistake to suppose that applied research and development cannot embody excellent science, there should be no departing in university or research councils from the principle that the

limited funds provided by the Government for research must be applied only in support of scientifically significant and valuable work.

Critical mass in research is important. It has been recognised, at least since the ABRC study in 1987, that the research money provided to universities has been dispersed too much and insufficiently concentrated on centres of excellence. Current HEFC research policy is producing a desirable shift to the best research departments in the leading research universities. It would be a matter of great concern if that policy were to be reversed in the name of relevance to wealth creation.

I have given merely an outline of a few of the difficult balances that my right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, and those who work with them, will have to keep in mind as they implement the White Paper. I am sure of their good will for science in the task, and hopeful of their success—and that of their successors—in it. However, I do not think that all parts of the Government have either understood or accepted the rationale for Government support for science and technology which I have described and which I believe is embodied in the White Paper.

Ultimately, we all have to recognise that the Whitehall machine is a pretty crude operation, and there is always the danger that the nuanced and subtle elegancies of policy balance in a White Paper will in practice be boiled down into simple and potentially destructive operational conclusions. I know that my right hon. Friend will want to ensure that that does not happen.

On this, perhaps rather minatory, note, let me briefly add a few concluding words about one of the great gaps in the White Paper—that relating to defence, on which I share the perceptions of my right hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey, the Chairman of the Select Committee. I do not want to sound like the Irishman who, when asked for directions, answered that he would not start from where his interlocutor found himself. I well understand the Government's dilemma in relation to defence research. Defence industries are already under great strain, and the motto "Let's not make the situation even more difficult" has consequently been the order of the day.

However, the true starting point for the debate must be the recognition that, as one of the big three after the war, aspiring still to sit at the top table, Britain has now for four decades taxed herself for military purposes beyond the strength of her economy.

One of the most serious aspects of that overtaxing is the absorption of scarce scientific and technological talent in defence-related work, with little or no civilian benefit and with high opportunity costs from the diversion of efforts from civilian purposes. The result is that far too many of Britain's leading industrial concerns are defence-dependent—an effect reinforced by generations of industrial strategists in high places investing in the existing and politically influential, and confusing success in subsidised exporting with the achievement of real and positive economic returns.

I shall suggest an alternative industrial strategy for those who are so rightly anxious to promote competitiveness and innovation in British industry. The cold war has ended, the requirement for sophisticated weapons is collapsing and, after the Iran debacle, international arms registers are the order of the day. The military bias of British and American industry in the post-war period no longer makes political sense—just as Japanese competition has long shown that it does not make economic or industrial sense.

What is needed is an industrial strategy designed to facilitate the most rapid shift of resources freed from a contracting defence industry to be used in competitive industries serving civilian markets. I make no judgment about how it would be best to do that, except to say that market mechanisms will work most effectively.

The hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam) has been showing approval for some of my remarks so far, but I have to say that I am deeply sceptical about Labour's idea of a defence conversion agency. Whatever way is chosen, I have no doubt that it is in that sphere that the present generation of Ministers has the best hope of improving long-term British industrial competitiveness.

If that effort were to be undertaken, not the least important of the resources to be freed would be the huge resources of scientific and technological brainpower that are still tied up in our defence industries. It is a pity that the Government have missed the opportunity to address that topic in all its depth and scale in the first major science and technological statement for 20 years, which comes at a time when the end of the cold war has so self-evidently created an occasion for a fundamental rethink on the subject.

A dangerous fallacy is still lurking in the air—that some way can be found to erect a strategy securing British industrial competitiveness on the basis of the Government's support for science and technology. I hope that I have shown why that idea is both misconceived and deeply threatening to one of Britain's remaining areas of undoubted world-class excellence—its excellence in fundamental science.

The Government's White Paper provides a basis from which that fallacy can be combated. Buy my last word today is that the influence of that fallacy will be successfully resisted only if my right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend, and those who work with them, stand by the settlement embodied in the White Paper and hold fast to the rationale for their work which it sets forth.

11.28 am

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I am sure that the House is indebted to the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) for his contribution. He may not be a member of the Front-Bench team now, but the insights that he gave in his analysis of military research and development and its consequences, and the importance of the science base, are valuable. I am sure that he will continue to make such contributions from the Back Benches.

Although the hon. Gentleman said that his speech was not a personal statement, it contained echoes of other personal statements when the hon. Gentleman slightly lifted the veil on what has been going on within and between Departments. That confirmed many of our suspicions.

In order to catch the last plane to my constituency this evening I shall have to leave before the end of the debate. I have written to Madam Speaker about that and told the Front-Bench spokesmen. I shall read the report of the debate in *Hansard*.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who has explicit responsibility for science and engineering

[Mr. James Wallace]

technology, is not just any Cabinet Minister but one who, by his performance today and in the past, shows clear enthusiasm and commitment. Contrary to what we have heard from the Opposition, this is the second such debate that we have had in Government time in 53 weeks. The White Paper heralds the biggest shake-up in the approach to science for two decades.

In view of all those ingredients, we should be excited at the prospect of a serious attempt to come to grips with a hitherto neglected and undervalued area of our national life. However, I fear that all too soon the excitement will disappear and we shall be left with the feeling that we have missed yet another opportunity for British science. The extent to which the Chancellor of the Duchy used quotes to try to buoy his case suggests that he also appreciates that.

As some hon. Members have already said, problems will be produced not so much by what is in the White Paper as what is not. However, it would be wrong to be wholly critical because the document contains positive proposals. The Technology Foresight exercise offers the prospect of a more purposeful sense of direction. Its embodiment of the annual "Forward Look" and the emphasis on a more open approach are welcome developments. I hope that there will be a more open approach and that we shall not see narrow objectives and straitjackets. The document is an opportunity to bring science and technology, Government and industry into a much more constructive partnership.

The Chancellor of the Duchy identified one of the criticisms of the White Paper, although he would claim that it is misplaced. It is the White Paper's failure to address funding. That is not a matter for another time and another place, because the issue is crucial. We take the view that the White Paper fails adequately to address industry's poor record on innovation and what can be done about it. I welcome the comments by the hon. Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw), who is the Chairman of the Select Committee on Science and Technology, about the current investigation into innovation. We look forward to the conclusions. Both those failures point to an underlying failure by Government Departments to get their act together. The speech by the hon. Member for Wantage confirms that.

Almost every hon. Member who has spoken so far has mentioned the Ministry of Defence. The White Paper contains no strategy for conversion from military to civilian research and development. Jobs are at stake the length and breadth of Britain from central Scotland to —dare I mention it?—Siemens Plessey Systems in Christchurch. If there is no strategy, many talented people will take their talents abroad, and that will be a great loss to the nation.

It is important to acknowledge past achievements, not least in basic science research. That has been generously funded over many years, but, although the Government may claim that during their 14 years in office there has been an increase, the application of a proper deflator to increases in salaries and in the cost of equipment shows that there has been a real reduction in resources for science over the past 14 years. During that period of reduction in our country, most of our competitors, recognising the importance of science in supporting modern industry, have been increasing their commitment to academic research.

There is a need to inject more resources and to make sure that we offer attractive careers to our young scientists. That means tackling low academic salaries and providing a career structure. I regret that, in response to an intervention, the Minister seemed to take a complacent attitude to that, reflecting the White Paper's attitude of passing the buck to the universities to let them sort out the problem. Anyone who knows about the difficulties faced by universities over their funding knows that it is a forlorn hope to expect them to undertake that from within their own resources.

It is disappointing that there is inadequate support from other Departments, especially the Department of Trade and Industry. When the President of the Board of Trade was stalking the country in his Back-Bench days, he made many speeches about reversing the trend of the decline in science funding. When he took up his present post we had great expectations of his doing something positive and imaginative. Instead, on the day of the White Paper's launch, the DTI announced its withdrawal from a range of new technology initiatives.

In the past week, the closure of the Warren Spring Laboratory was announced. That was mentioned by the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam). As the right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) said, many people identify the importance of the environmental challenge as the new frontier for science and research and development. There is a need to devise new, clean technologies, and Warren Spring could have been said to be at the cutting edge of that new environmental technology. Now it will be lumped together with the Atomic Energy Authority research station at Harwell.

Many of us recall how the dead hand of Harwell stopped Dr. Salter proceeding at Edinburgh university with his innovative ideas for wave power. Although Harwell is no longer dominated and obsessed by the amount of money spent on nuclear research, it has held back at least one project that could have led to an important development in renewable energy technology.

The attitude of the DTI is to limit support to the exploitation of proven rather than new and uncertain technologies. If that attitude prevails, short-termism, which has bedevilled British industry, preventing it from trying to innovate and establish a link between academic science and industry, will be made worse.

I should like to quote from a letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) from Dr. John Isaacs of the department of pathology at Cambridge university. My hon. Friend wrote to him after he read an article about an important developoment, CAMPATH-1H, in the treatn ent of rheumatoid arthritis. My hon. Friend sought more information and in his letter Dr. Isaacs stated:

"Progress is slow primarily as a result of financial constraints. The nature of our research makes it extremely expensive, and whilst Government agencies such as the Medical Research Council do their best, they cannot provide all of the necessary finances. Sadly, science does not carry a high political profile in the UK and there seems little prospect of increasing central funding to the Medical Research Council for work such as ours. Indeed, the current Government has put clinical science funding squarely into the court of Industry. Not surprisingly, however, Industry is primarily interested in products which are close to major clinical applications. Thus we have been developing CAMPATH-1H

and related compounds for more than 13 years, but an Industrial sponsor has only recently been found. Furthermore, such funding may remove one's 'scientific licence' during product development or block further novel developments for purely corporate reasons, and is therefore far from ideal . . . I apologise for venting our frustrations upon you in this way but we all feel very let down by the recent Science White Paper which does not tackle the fundamental problems of research funding."

That letter is from a person who has been very much involved in an important development in medical science. It is not the view of a politician but of someone in the field. I hope that, collectively, we will take his criticisms to heart as we address these issues.

It is clear that academic science cannot be translated into new products and processes without expenditure by industry. It is sometimes tempting to lay the blame at the door of Governments, but the problem is so endemic that the problem could be laid at the door of this Government or that of the last Labour Government or even the last Liberal Government. It has been a problem for at least a century.

Our poor showing in adapting expertise and brilliance at the basic scientific level and putting that into product development is a measure of industry's failure to pick up and exploit the creativity of British science. The Government blame the scientists and say that they are not coming up with the right kind of research, and use their usual panacea of putting business men in charge of the research councils. In other words, those who have failed British science—I direct this not against individuals but against the generality—are being put in charge of research and could infect it with the same short-termism that has bedevilled British industry for some time.

It is important to recognise that there is a cultural problem. The very fact that many hon. Members have spoken of the need to raise the status of scientists, engineers and technologists is indicative of the lack of proper status from which they have suffered for so long. It is also important to concentrate on education and training. The national curriculum addresses the need for pupils up to the age of 16 in England to be provided with basic teaching in science and technology, and that is welcome. However, a curriculum commitment is worthless unless there are the teachers and the equipment to make it a reality. With too few teachers of maths, physics and technology, it is clear that we shall need a crash programme to train teachers in those subjects and secure adequate provision of text books and equipment.

Beyond the age of 16, A-level specialisation, particularly in England, means that many bright pupils do not study maths or science. While I could not be held up as a good example, having been allowed by my school to give up all science except maths—I am pleased to learn from the right hon. Member for Halton that that redeems me—at the secondary 2 level, there is still an opportunity to pursue at least one or two sciences to a much later stage within the Scottish system.

We must also recognise the value of scientists and engineers and encourage the employment of graduate scientists and engineers. For some time, my party has been advocating a scheme that was pioneered in West Germany in the 1970s, whereby small and medium-sized firms were paid 50 per cent. of the salary of graduates on a sliding scale over five years to encourage them to take on science and engineering graduates. That scheme was wound up in West Germany in the 1980s, because it had achieved its objectives, but has recently been reintroduced in east Germany to try to bring on that development there. We should consider that here.

We must recognise, as the right hon. Member for Halton said, that there are also problems with the financial institutions, with the reluctance of the City to take a sufficiently long-term view, and its insistence on having an arm's-length relationship between financiers and industry. We should be promoting longer-term relationships and using non-executive directors in a continental-style supervisory board so that they have a much more supportive relationship with the company in which they have invested. Within those institutional ideas, there are examples of imaginative measures that should have been included in the White Paper if it was to address some of the fundamental issues.

I do not blame the Chancellor of the Duchy, who is clearly committed to his subject, but he is obviously not getting the necessary support from other parts of government. When he asked in his review why the United Kingdom seemed to be less successful than its competitors in translating inventions to the marketplace, his thoughts were in the right direction and his ambitions were high. His failure to deliver suggests that his hands have been tied by the Treasury, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Defence. Therefore, he has had to concentrate on what he can do in his own empire and has rearranged some chairs in the research councils. That is not necessarily bad in itself, but when more glittering prizes were at stake, that remains a missed opportunity.

11.43 am

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has an horrendous task before him. I have seen a DTI report, published in 1993, containing a list of international rankings of companies by expenditure on research and development. One of our leading companies—perhaps the most leading—is ICI, which comes out at No. 47. The list is roughly as follows: in the first 50 companies there are 20 United States companies, 11 Japanese, six German, four Swiss, three French and a number of other European companies.

It is interesting to look at the participants in Germany. They include Daimler-Benz, Siemens, Bayer, Hoechst and BASF and Volkswagen. Before the war, IG Farben was broken into three parts—Bayer, Hoechst and BASF. They have all now grown larger than ICI and are spending much more money on research, so it is not at all surprising that they score so high in the international list. I mention that because that is the problem which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster faces and the one with which he will have to deal.

The White Paper has some extremely useful recommendations, but one point stands out clearly: there has been a complete dispersal of funding. The Office of Science and Technology has no responsibility for research and development in the Ministry of Defence, the Department of Trade and Industry or the Department of Health. A large part of it is beyond the responsibility of the Chancellor. I make a plea for a more fully integrated science policy. When the Director-General of Research Councils, mentioned on page 32, assumes his responsibilities, he will allocate a much smaller sum of money than he should have received.

[Sir Trevor Skeet]

Civil responsibilities are important. Hon. Members have said that the defence budget will be cut. If Yeltsin falls in the former Soviet Union, I cannot imagine that there will be any such diminution, and I hope that the defence budget will continue as it is, but there must also be an increase in the amount of money for science.

There is a need for change in the public attitude to the profession of engineers, but engineers themselves also have a responsibility. They are fragmented and must get together in a more centralised unit. We must recognise the important contribution that engineers can make to wealth creation. I think that they can do it, but the attitude of the Government towards industry in general is important. Britain must take a leaf out of the French book and help our companies abroad. Commercial facilities of United Kingdom embassies throughout the world should be directed towards helping United Kingdom manufacturing companies that are seeking local market intelligence. If we support companies, not merely in the United Kingdom but abroad, we can rehabilitate a situation that has caused us great problems.

The crux of the report comes in pages 16 to 23 on Technology Foresight. That programme has been launched by the Technology Foresight steering group and will contribute to the thinking of the Council for Science and Technology, which will in turn influence Her Majesty's Government. That is a critical body and, if my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary can tell us, I should like to know what its composition will be. Will it be broad enough in its base to do its task? It is crucial that the right people are appointed to it and I hope that there will not be a reshuffling of the old pack.

Let me refer to one or two changes that have occurred. The Council for Science and Technology was called ACOST—the Advisory Council on Science and Technology—from 1987. Prior to that, there was the Advisory Council for Applied Research and Development. All moved on, one after the other. They did much the same thing—advised Governments on the course and picked the winners, and ensured that taxpayers' money was not wasted but put to good use.

In an intervention, I asked my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy to nominate who is to be the Director-General of Research Councils, because he will be vital and the arch-piece of the whole system. Sir David Phillips will have some responsibility, because he will deal with the science "boundary commission", which will allocate the boundaries between the six research councils. The chemical industry and biotechnology industry must also be satisfied about their placings.

The work of the Director-General of Research Councils was formerly done by the Advisory Board for the Research Councils, which succeeded the Council for Scientific Policy in 1972. Most of those groups were heralded with all the pipes that could be put behind them and were told that they could fulfil the future of United Kingdom scientific policy, but some petered out over the years.

The crux of the White Paper, which I support, is to determine at governmental level, through all the agencies available—including the Royal Society and people inside government—who will be the future winners. I believe that it is for industry to provide the answer, but the Government may take some of the responsibility because they will provide some of the cash. It is important that we do not appoint to those councils people who will not be able to discharge the highest responsibilities of state. We must not repeat past mistakes.

I feel obliged to pass over defence because that has been adequately covered—although it could be the subject of a full day's debate. About £2·6 billion per annum is spent on research in defence, and lengthy consideration should be given to whether a bigger allocation should be made to civil research.

As to executive agencies, I support the approach taken by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, although the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam) does not. It has been indicated that Warren Spring Laboratory is to be closed. In my judgment, it will not, but will be merged with the AEA Technology at Harwell. A merger means not necessarily a closure, but the transference of one set of servants to another facility that will remain a government institution. As Harwell is a DTI institution, for the time being it will be a case of one function being added to another.

If it is possible to farm out such responsibilities to other bodies, which can probably undertake them much better, why not do the same in respect of the National Physical Laboratory, the Laboratory of the Government Chemist and the National Weights and Measures Laboratory—all of which are at Teddington and part of the DTI? The same question could be asked of the National Engineering Laboratory in Glasgow. Are they being lined up for launching at a future date? Could not their work be done adequately in the private sector? The House would be interested to know.

Several years ago, the annual subscription to CERN was about £55 million, which was large. Today, we find that the responsibility for international subscriptions will be borne by the science budget as a whole. However, as the Science and Engineering Research Council is to be split in two, we may find ourselves in great difficulties. The part that deals with heavy science may find its expenditure reducing over the years. Why should the whole of the science budget take it? Why not follow the practice in Italy, where funds provided through the Foreign Office become a charge on the state, particularly for foreign subscriptions?

As to research council boundaries, I understand the advantage of dividing one council into a number of departments, because, without referring to the House or anyone else, it will be possible to move a subject from one box into another very quietly—but when the councils are granted their royal charters and their boundaries are defined, they will each vigorously argue their case.

Chemists engaged in the development of proteins, genes, DNA and so on and in the application of biotechnology must depend more on chemists and on chemical engineers than on biologists. Biotechnology is fitted into three research councils. The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council will absorb the Agricultural and Food Research Council. The Medical Research Council will embrace health care, biotechnology and the food industries. The Natural Environment Research Council will be involved in the environmental area.

Biotechnology has been separated from the mainstream of chemistry funding located in the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council. The Institution of Chemical Engineers complains:

'biotechnology should, in the new Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council, be separated from process engineering, which is logically placed in the new Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council."

The institution feels that biochemical engineering is a vital aspect of biotechnology. Either the groupings should be modified or some way should be found of funding biochemical engineering as a section of process engineering.

I believe that chemistry has been misplaced and that anything affiliated with chemistry and biotechnology should have its frontiers re-examined, to ensure that those particular industries—which are most valuable to the United Kingdom—are not disturbed. Much work will have to be done on the six research councils to avoid fragmenting associated industries.

Over some years, I have seen the rundown of manufacturing industry in the United Kingdom, and since the war the virtual disappearance of our domestic motor cycle, bicycle, shipbuilding, machine tool, cutlery, glassware, electronic equipment and, to a certain extent, motor vehicle industries.

Mr. Ken Purchase (Wolverhampton, North-East): Is there anything left?

Sir Trevor Skeet: I assure the hon. Gentleman that it can be vouchsafed that many good industries remain in the United Kingdom. No one country in the world can have all the blessings and all the stars. I have been examining the allocation of employees in the United Kingdom. It appears that more than 70 per cent. are employed in the service industries, and between 20 and 25 per cent. in manufacturing industry. Our scientific base is too small. A figure approaching half the United Kingdom's budget is spent on welfare and health. The welfare of the nation, in its truest sense, lies in manufacturing industry, which has to support everything else; I feel that more should be contributed to it. I hope that we can debate this subject again soon, because it is vitally important. The White Paper has great potential as a framework, but I should like to know more of the details relating to, for instance, the selection of the experts.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, but I shall be very critical if the proposals are not implemented as I should like them to be.

12 noon

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): The hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet), who is a veteran of science debates, has made another valuable contribution, and the hon. Members for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) and for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) have also made thoughtful, well-informed and constructive speeches.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster says that there is little real difference between the parties on science policy. Before discussing that agreeable proposition, let me explore one or two areas in which I see substantial differences—not so much between Government and Opposition policy as between the Government's views and those of working engineers and scientists. The question of resources for science follows from the economic gain from technological competitiveness; technological competitiveness, in turn, follows from research and development and a command of the science base.

There is nothing wrong with the British economy that could not be put right by 2 per cent. per annum faster growth in the export of manufactures than is represented by our share of world trade and our relative prices. That means £2 billion more next year, another £2 billion on top of that the year after, and so on. What could be simpler? However, it needs an awful lot of doing.

It needs much more than technology transfer and research and development. It needs investors; it needs capacity to increase investment; it needs training; it needs intelligent corporate strategies; it needs whole-hearted participation in global development, with both inward and outward investment. However, we also need new and competitive technology. That means learning from others and working at the frontiers of development.

There is a wide misapprehension—not only in the Government—of the time lags involved in the profitable application of research and development. The heaviest development costs come near the point of production and pay-off; given an expenditure weighting, it is reasonable to look for the pay-off from research and development within three to eight years. We are talking about a complex interaction between research and technological development, rather than a sequential process from discovery to application. A vigorous growth in scientific and technological activity is an important factor in the achievement of economic growth within the current decade.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster should have started his argument with the Treasury and the DTI by contributing to their success, or at least reducing the extent of their failure. The grimmer the prospects for the economy, the greater the emphasis needed on technological competitiveness. There is no sign that the right hon. Gentleman was able, or even tried, to get the Treasury and the DTI to understand the plight in which we find ourselves without a more technologically competitive industrial base.

Tactically—no doubt with the prodding of the hon. Member for Wantage—the right hon. Gentleman won the support of the Thatcherite Chief Secretary to the Treasury, against the barbarian President of the Board of Trade, who wanted to shut down basic science altogether and stuff the loot into helicopters for the Iraqs of the future. Tactically, however, he did not get the Treasury to understand the latest evidence from the United States on the effectiveness of intervention in industrial technology and research and development fiscal incentives, such as Bronwyn Hall's recent NBER paper; not did he clear up the muddle-headedness of the President of the Board of Trade, who spurns support for near-market research while demanding that Government-supported research be near the market.

As for defence research, although the Ministry of Defence acknowledges the "spin-in" to defence from civilian micro-electronic and information technology, the Chancellor did get the Ministry to understand that defence research is gravely weakened generally by not being thoroughly integrated with civil research and development.

I am no enthusiastic supporter of the security services. However, I cannot for the life of me see how MI5 and MI6, let alone peacekeeping to guard against communal strife, terrorism and industrial sabotage, crop, animal and human disease and natural and man-made environmental disasters—the security threats of today and tomorrow—can be adequately safeguarded by a 1940s-stye defence research and development establishment. Even those who

[Dr. Jeremy Bray]

deal with the things that go bang—the things that move fast and unerringly—have more to learn from integration with civil science and technology than from claustrophobic, exclusively defence-orientated work.

The Chancellor can influence departmental research activity by helping Departments to understand how, by using science better, they can achieve greater success in their main task. Directors of departmental laboratories have considerable insight in that regard; but what are they to make of an Office of Science and Technology that asks not, "How can we help your Department to understand how it can make better use of your science in this laboratory?" but, "Is what you are doing really necessary? Could someone else do it more cheaply? How will you subject your work to market testing?"

No wonder the Chancellor of the Duchy and his minions are sent packing with fleas in their ears by other Departments. Does that help the right hon. Gentleman to establish the authority he needs when he must deploy the full weight of scientific opinion with his colleagues—for example, to correct the mistaken belief of the Secretary of State for Health that the threat of an AIDS epidemic from heterosexual activity is diminishing?

As I have said, the grimmer the prospects for the economy, the greater is the country's need for competitive technology and research and development. That is what the Chancellor has failed to get across. He has all the arguments to hand: he can deploy them with the research councils and, in particular, with the Economic and Social Research Council. All he has managed to do, however, is secure a cut in the planned science budget, and in Government research and development generally.

When it comes to matters on which the right hon. Gentleman might claim to have achieved more agreement within the scientific community, I wonder whether he realises quite what he has taken on. I consider the restructuring of the research councils sensible: I am glad that biology is being strengthened so that it can build on the incredible advances that it has made.

The Chancellor, however, has now taken responsibility for such matters as deciding how much should go into the various research councils, and into "big science" in particular. It is no good his wringing his hands and saying how much more sensible if would be if American particle physicists scrapped their plans for a super-conducting super-collider, and put their money into CERN's more intelligent and cost-effective large hadron collider.

My view and, I believe, that of many scientists is that there is scope for fascinating and fast advance in particle physics theory, but it is by no means clear, however, that, starting in 50 years' time, physicists would still want to build large particle accelerators. Conceptually, there are ways in which high concentrations of energy might be created in the laboratory—by what the Chancellor might describe as wind surfing on laser beams in ways that they will explain to him at Culham.

The big science today, with the big, diverse, understandable and fascinating pay-off, is astronomy. Particle physics can get only so much science support worldwide, and if the super-conducting super-collider goes ahead, the large hadron collider does not. No science council and no Government-appointed or independent body will ever give the Chancellor that kind of advice. The Chancellor will have to do better than he has so far if he is to justify such a tough decision in the minds of most scientists and successfully divert the money to other sciences instead of losing it to science as a whole.

Mr. Spink: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that we should support the joint European torus project because it may give an engineering solution to fusion physics?

Dr. Bray: I understand what the hon. Gentleman is saying. The joint European torus is a different matter; it has nothing to do with high-energy particle physics. It is to do with methods of electricity generation in the future. I believe that it should be financed by a research levy on the generating authorities, but the Government have effectively closed research into electricity generation.

The Chancellor has started many hares: securing genuine career development for scientists; giving engineering the right kind of research; getting the research councils sufficiently to support overlapping; underpinning disciplines such as chemistry; making the Technology Foresight programme more fertile than a mule, a cross-breed between an academic science policy research unit and a Neddy talking shop. I hope desperately, for the sake of the country, that he can chase them all.

I shall not embarass the right hon. Gentleman by enumerating all those policies that he has lifted from Labour policy—from which, indeed, his office was hatched—but one that I shall mention, as a contribution to the vital public understanding and enjoyment of science, is a national exposition of contemporary science. Although that will culminate in 2001, the build-up needs to start now. If science is so fascinating because it helps us to understand the world—even the funny job that we try to do in this place—it is a fascination and understanding which must be shared with the community as a whole.

12.12 pm

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): The White Paper, with its emphasis on the linkage between science and technology and wealth creation, comes after 150 years in which that linkage has been progressively weakened. It has been weakened not by deliberate intent or malice but by the lack of strategic overview of the impact of disparate policies and social trends throughout the period. That is the focus of what I want to deal with today, because we have evolved, as many people have observed, into an industrial society with an anti-industrial culture, which is at the core of the problem that we must now address.

In the 19th century, the heirs of the giants of the industrial revolution became country landowners. In his book, "Audit of War", Corelli Barnett described with frightening clarity how in the post-war period our manufacturing industry was unable to produce the products that our scientists had designed. In the post-war period, the low esteem and rewards for engineers have bedevilled recruitment of the very best people. Death duties and high taxation have inhibited the growth of family companies, which in Germany have been one of the triggers for long-term investment in research and development. Family companies in Germany have passed knowledge and wealth on from generation to generation through retained profits.

We effectively destroyed our domestic motor industry by using it as an economic regulator, subjecting it to

repeated changes with which it could not cope, while the Japanese used their car industry as the launch pad of their industrial endeavour in the post-war world.

The irony is that there is no shortage of innovative ideas or world-class science and technology in Britain. But by the late 1970s, we had a real lack of world-class ability to manufacture the fruits of that science and technology base.

Dr. Spink: Will my hon. Friend acknowledge that there has been an increase in research and development in motor vehicle industries of 65 per cent. in the last decade? Does not he welcome that?

Mr. Batiste: I am coming on to that point.

I was talking about the position in the late 1970s. We had poor industrial relations and little management training. We had poor technology transfer from academic institutions. We had a lack of large personal discretionary wealth, which has been the main feature of innovative entrepreneurial investment in the United States. We had over-institutionalised financial structures and a growing lack of skills at foreman and technician level in industry.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) pointed out, quite a lot changed in the 1980s. Taxation on companies has been reduced and industrial relations transformed. The privatisation process has put large chunks of our industry outside the constraints of the public sector borrowing requirement. The single market process is developing a marketplace for Europe of a size that will enable our companies to compete more effectively with Japan and the United States. Our universities have become more focused on the need to relate to industry.

The pharmaceutical industry has shown that it can draw money out of the stock markets for high-quality investment in a research and development based industry, which has enabled it to become a world leader. We have received massive inward investment from Japan and the United States, which has reborn our motor industry and has triggered world-class manufacturing practices in the component supply industry, which means that not only can we supply our own domestic needs, but, increasingly, we will be able to find new markets in Europe and elsewhere.

The reality is that things have improved in the United Kingdom in the 1980s, but they have improved everywhere else, too. The rest of the world has not stood still. The pace of change is increasing all the time. Our science and technology base is one of our greatest assets. We must face up to the challenge of drawing out the wealth-creating opportunities of that science base while maintaining its creative impetus and independence.

To achieve that, it is vital that the same tune is sung throughout government. The creation of the Office of Science and Technology and the appointment of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor was, I believe, an essential first step in creating the vehicle within government for focusing policy on science and technology. The White Paper is the second step in the right direction and has rightly received a positive and justified welcome.

Many colleagues have highlighted many of the features of the White Paper and I shall not repeat those points, save to summarise what I see as the most important—the recognition of the core role of science and technology in wealth creation, the identification of the United Kingdom's science and technology needs, the restatement of the need for dual funding of universities, the important strengthening of the role of the chief scientific adviser so that he can make a more decisive impact in the councils of government and the acceptance of Government involvement in all stages of the innovatory process, including near-market research.

It must be said that our history is littered with examples of our having carried forward the R and D programme to the point where it is about to achieve commercial success, but we have then withdrawn Government support and the programme has failed. A classic example of particular relevance today is that of communication satellites. We developed a world lead, withdrew resources just as the product approached the marketplace and allowed the United States to overtake us and to reach a position of dominance.

The development of the Government's role in Technology Foresight and the development of technology transfer are crucial, as is the restructuring of the research councils with mission-oriented focus. The identification of training needs in industry at large and the education of the public are also part of the process of making us a culture which is friendly to industry and research and development rather than one that is hostile to wealth creation.

The one aspect of the White Paper with which I had some difficulty is the rejection of the concept of Faraday centres. The Select Committee on Science and Technology recently visited Germany where we saw the excellent work of the Max Planck Society and the Fraunhofer and Steinbeis institutes. On reflection, I think that my right hon. Friend was right. Without wishing to diminish the considerable contribution that those institutes make in Germany, I felt that they diminished what went into the universities and, therefore, what could come out of the universities. I believe that the creation of the Smith Institute for Mathematics at Cambridge and Oxford was a better model for us than the German model which no doubt works extremely well there.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): I also went on that Select Committee trip. Does not the hon. Gentleman agree that institutes such as the Stuttgart Institute for Micro-Electronics are an excellent example of partnership between the state and private sector? Should not the Chancellor consider carefully such institutes which help to cultivate small and medium-sized enterprises?

Mr. Batiste: I entirely endorse what the hon. Gentleman says. Clearly, we saw mechanisms in Germany that provide funding to bring research ideas out of the universities, develop them that little bit further and push them into industry. It is important that we study and learn from those mechanisms, but my point was that in Britain it could be better done within the university structure rather than in institutions that drew strength away from the universities, as I felt was the case in Germany.

We must now consider whether the promise of the White Paper will be fulfilled and whether the powers of the Office of Science and Technology are adequate for the tasks it has set itself. There will always be an overlap between the responsibilities of different Departments of State. That is inevitable, but we are rapidly approaching a time when we need to carry out a radical reappraisal of the structure of government. We have not had such a reappraisal for a very long time. The nature of our society

[Mr. Batiste]

and the challenges we face are changing. It is inevitable that some of the structures of government would have to change along with them.

How, for example, can the Department of Health effectively be the sponsor of the pharmaceutical industry while being its largest customer? It is a conflict of interest which means that one side is not given adequate weight in Government debates. How can the Ministry of Defence, which is charged with the security of the nation and trying to achieve value for money, be responsible for promoting the civilian spin-offs of the technology that it develops? What does the Department of Employment do which cannot be divided more efficiently among other Departments?

Clearly, we need to introduce into government the same sense of mission orientation that we have introduced into the research councils. There needs to be a clear distinction between the roles of customer, supplier, regulator and provider. When we have a clear mission orientation within government, each of those roles can be performed more effectively.

If the needs of our science base and of the wealth creation process that arises from that science base are to be fulfilled, the OST must have a decisive voice in many of the decisions of government, even those with consequences far outside the strict confines of science and technology debates.

It is clear from the debate today that there is a wide welcome in the House and in the country as a whole for the White Paper and for the strategic direction it sets out. The House wishes the Chancellor well in the battles to come. Members of the Select Committee share that wish and we shall do our bit to promote his functions in government. We shall monitor his progress carefully and with the keenest possible interest because, as we approach the turn of the century, there can be nothing more important to the success of our country in the next century than that he should succeed in his job now.

12.25 pm

Mr. Ken Purchase (Wolverhampton, North-East): In order to compete in the world economy, Britain must improve the performance of its manufacturing industry. As has already been said many times, the key is investment in research and development.

Where investment in research and development has been high, as in chemicals and pharmaceutical, we lead the world, although even in that instance our position is threatened following the first assault by the Department of Health on the list of drugs which may be prescribed on the national health service. Evidence already shows that fewer patents are being registered by British pharmaceutical companies since the assault. The Government may claim that their action has reduced the level of year-on-year increases in the drugs bill with, as yet, they claim, no discernible effect on patients treated with generic equivalents. The question is, what effect will the loss of sales of proprietary brands in the home market have on companies' ability to invest in research and ultimately to maintain the lead which creates the demand for new and developed products?

Let us be clear about the importance of exports, especially of high added value goods. Manufacturing accounts for four fifths of our exports. By comparison, manufacturing accounts for only one fifth of our gross domestic product, whereas in the 1970s, it accounted for almost one third. No wonder our balance of trade is in such dire straits.

As our industry has shrunk, the budgets available, company by company, for research and development and for training have withered. That is especially true in the small and medium-sized companies, where the first casualties of recession and cuts are inevitably training, R and D, marketing and all the activities that are not regarded as essential for survival. Now we are sucking in imports at enormous cost to substitute for what, just 15 years ago, we had both the technology and the capacity to make for ourselves.

As mainline R and D budgets have shrunk, so Britain has lost the value of simultaneously developed complementary technology. In the early 1960s, I worked on experimental parts for Concorde and TSR 2—hydraulic flight control and landing systems. A whole new body of knowledge was developed in respect of metal cutting and measurement control. Titanium has excellent weight-to-strength properties, ideal for the purposes of aerospace components, but it is an alloy whose use is limited because of the very high friction created during the cutting process, which created measurement control problems.

That led to a demand for new cutting techniques and to the consequent further development of cobalt and ceramic tools and new resins and abrasives. Those demands necessarily involved numbers of companies not directly contracting in to the Concorde project. In that way, all the knowledge gained and the techniques developed became the common currency of engineering technology. Unfortunately, these days every company that I visit relies on imports to bring continuous improvements to those processes.

The brilliant world-leading machine tool sector around Coventry, Birmingham and Wolverhampton—and a small group of high-tech companies in the south-east—has virtually gone. One is led to ask, "Is there anything left?" Fortunately, there is a little left, and it is working very hard. In the late 1980s, Ministers were declaring that the import of machine tools was a sign that our manufacturers were gearing up for recovery. To my mind, however, what was presented as good news sadly confirmed that our own machine tool sector was as good as dead.

Times move on and science will not be thwarted. Now the same company that I worked for has developed new smart fly-by-light control systems, using fibre optics to replace the typical mechanical systems currently used in most aircraft. The first flight using the system was on 13 February this year and the system was validated from flight data by the Civil Aviation Authority. However, some doubt—I hope only temporary—has been cast on continuing Government support. On 6 May, the Select Committee on Trade and Industry learned from the Minister of State at the Department that support for the civil aircraft research and demonstration programme is to be reduced by 20 per cent. per year over the next three years. I am not sure how fly-by-light will be affected, but the uncertainty created at all levels within participating companies is profound.

Just when reduced demand worldwide is resulting in major United Kingdom aerospace companies stepping back programmes and just when we have the even greater problem of companies in the far east that are determined

to go into aerospace in a big way—Indonesia is a case in point—the British Government choose to shed doubt on their support for world-beating technology being developed in this country.

Hon. Members must ask how the prospect of stepping back from research and development can possibly be compatible with the claims in the White Paper that the science base is to be protected from cuts. If the Department of Trade and Industry can contemplate cuts in near-market research, what chance does blue skies research have? In any event, the White Paper contains no plans for vital increases in science-based funding over the next few years, without which there will be a negative effect on the confidence of scientists and engineers throughout the country.

The Government seem to think that their emphasis on shifting resources towards projects with the greatest industrial relevance will be greeted with acclamation—it may not be unqualified. The best United Kingdom companies have always realised the value of original research, without which the industrial vibrancy created by a successful programme of research to market innovation is lost.

The White Paper fails to tackle the need for long-term financial support for research. Its authors are confined to a market philosophy and necessarily take only a short-term view. That short-termism is especially a characteristic of pension fund managers' attitudes. They are under constant pressure to arrange their portfolios so that they can consistently out-perform the average return. As pension funds and other insurance interests hold roughly 50 per cent. of all shares in companies, they are in a powerful position to demand a return when, judging by company profits, none should really be available.

It is a feature of R and D investment that it is overwhelmingly funded by retained profits which diminish as shareholders demand a better-than-average dividend from cutting-edge companies that are desperate to invest in winning, long-term projects. That is a major problem for Britain which our rivals do not suffer. It is fuelled by the lack of loyalty felt towards our industry by fund managers and it contrasts with the very much greater level of individual and non-corporate ownership common in America, Japan, Germany and France, to which reference was made earlier.

That ownership yields a fierce pride towards the companies in which people have invested and that is lacking in Great Britain. Not too long ago, I recall a lord of the realm—Sir Jeffrey Sterling—saying, in relation to shipping and registration, that his first duty was to his shareholders and not to Britain. Such a statement is indicative of the lack of loyalty felt towards our indigenous companies and industries that seems to be common throughout the country.

The White Paper is silent on such matters, no doubt warned off by competing departmental interests. However, it is not so silent when it enthuses about new committee structures for the research councils. Some might say that that is simply an exercise in deck-chair management while no one is captain of the ship. Someone must be put in charge soon.

A genuine partnership between education, industry, finance and the Government is urgently required. However, only the Government can provide the catalyst for that to happen. Economic modelling suggests that significant national benefits are available if, as a result of real partnership, improved manufacturing performance can be achieved. Modelling also shows, despite some inefficiencies resulting from badly managed Government intervention such as the overly-bureaucratic procedures required to obtain finance, that a balance of advantage will remain and will result in improved industrial performance at a new higher equilibrium position.

We have some remarkable inherent strengths and advantages in many of our best companies. However, genuine understanding by the Government is necessary to ensure that support is available to encourage invention and innovation. Doing nothing except reorganising the research councils is not an option. Full European co-operation is too far away to prevent further deterioration in our global competitive position. Hoping for inward investment from Japanese companies enthusiastic to take advantage of British inventiveness is foolish in the extreme.

The way forward is to invest heavily in supply-side changes that favour the whole process of education, research and the manufacturing sector. Only in that way will the natural ability and potential of our people be realised and released. We must demonstrate our confidence in British-owned companies based in this country. That means that they must be allowed to develop with the use of a healthy level of retained profits and free from financial speculators and greedy takeover moves. In such an environment, our companies can grow at similar rates to those of our international competitors.

For the whole period of Conservative Governments, the emphasis has been on the acquisition, stripping out and selling of companies that have been the backbone of British manufacturing. Now, when manufacturing represents such a small part—one fifth, as I said earlier—of gross domestic product, far too many City fleas are getting a free ride and a free meal on the over-burdened, over-stretched body of British industry.

I regret that the White Paper fails to argue strongly for a cultural change which would value the scientists and engineers on whom the country is so dependent for sustaining our well-being. I regret also that it fails to recognise the opportunity to put the real added value of applied science and technology at the top of the agenda.

Because of that failure, the White Paper can be only partly welcomed. Perhaps in future it will be seen as an occasion when once again, the Government did not miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity.

12.39 pm

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): Contrary to the innuendo of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase), I warmly welcome the White Paper. I hope that the hon. Gentleman's criticisms and those of other hon. Members, in particular the pointed but intelligent comments of my hon. Friends the Members for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) and for Wantage (Mr. Jackson), will be taken to heart when the Government consider future action.

I also welcome the White Paper because I am honoured to be chairman of the all-party engineering development group of this House and of the other place. The White Paper is a further illustration of the Government's commitment to pushing manufacturing, engineering, technology and science up to the top of the political agenda. That would not have happened without the

[Mr. Tim Rathbone]

support and commitment of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, who was responsible for setting up the Office of Public Service and Science, for which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and my hon. Friend the newly appointed Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science are responsible.

The White Paper is also a significant indication of the determination to improve the competitiveness of British industry, and that determination was highlighted in the House only a week ago. It is an indication of closer contact and interaction between industry, academia and the Government. Training and enterprise councils are an illustration of that, as are company training schemes, both of which are mentioned in the White Paper. Only the other day, I had the privilege of opening the university of Brighton's teaching company centre—just outside my constituency but, of course, embracing it. We in Sussex are proud that it is already the largest teaching company centre in the country.

I welcome the creation of the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council, and I voice the same hope that has been voiced by some of my hon. Friends—that practising engineers from industry will be strongly represented on the council.

The White Paper is also a welcome reminder of the importance of setting high standards, particularly in engineering. Standard setting in Europe is now very influential worldwide, in contrast with years gone by, when most standard setting emanated from the United States. The United Kingdom, within Europe, is a world leader, and we should praise the British Standards Institution's job in that sphere.

From the engineering standpoint, the White Paper underlines the importance of engineering to the United Kingdom. That point cannot be overstated. It has been stated by Ministers time and again, yet somehow it does not sink into everybody's mind. In engineering, we have annual sales of £100,000 million, including £50,000 million of exports, output accounting for 42 per cent. of our manufacturers' gross domestic product, and the employment of about 2 million people. That also emphasises the importance of the White Paper to manufacturing and engineering within manufacturing in this country.

Like others before me, I wish to ask one or two questions. Will Government funding be adequate to the task that the White Paper identifies? For instance, are the Government pledged to protect the science vote as an investment in our country's future from any imminent Budget cuts? My right hon. Friend cannot commit himself on that point, but he can commit himself to the battle for it.

What additional help can be expected from the Treasury to encourage the financing and introduction of industrial innovation, especially through the Technology Foresight exercise? I and other hon. Members wonder whether the Treasury is close enough to industry to understand its real needs.

We must question whether more industrially relevant research can be undertaken without a serious reduction in support from the research councils for basic research, which is already mission-oriented. That research accounts for 20 per cent. of the research councils' expenditure. What can be done to encourage and help industrial managers to grasp the opportunities offered by British research and innovation, and to make the long-term investment that is needed to profit from it?

The central issue relates to how we regain Britain's position as a world-class manufacturer. That is not thoroughly addressed in the White Paper. The reason may be traced to a point made by hon. Members on both sides of the House about Government policy coherence through all Departments to ensure that science, engineering and technology are developed.

While I welcome the added emphasis on masters' degrees, I share the worries expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey and the right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) about basic education in terms of the teaching of mathematics and arithmetic in the national curriculum. Do we need to consider broadening the sixth form curriculum and giving students greater encouragement to continue their education and vocational training until 18, or even after?

The Department of Trade and Industry has been mentioned in that context. Should it be given the main responsibility for science, engineering and technology development? Having raised that question, I must say that the Department has cut its annual expenditure on research and development, and does not seem to be committed to the maintenance of support for innovation.

The future role of the Ministry of Defence was mentioned by my hon. Friends the Members for Pudsey and for Wantage. What Government help will be given to assist market forces in the switch from military to civil research and development? I suppose that it all comes back to a recommitment to developing engineering, science, technology and our manufacturing potential.

An anti-industrial culture still too often prevails. In all Government Departments, there is room for encouragement to change. The Royal Academy of Engineering and other institutions and federations in the engineering world will do their bit to help the Government bring about the necessary change. The contrast between our commitment to national excellence in science, engineering and technology and our relative weakness in exploiting it to economic advantage still remains. The White Paper represents a most welcome beginning to a process of change. Equally, that process must continue to develop.

12.48 pm

Mrs. Anne Campbell (Cambridge): I enjoyed the speech of the hon. Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) who made some valid points to which I shall return.

One statement in the White Paper, with which I entirely agree, states:

> "Women are the country's biggest single most undervalued and therefore under-used human resource."

It is perhaps no great surprise, but nevertheless a great disappointment, to find that just nine lines of that 74-page document were devoted to the subject of attracting more women into science and engineering.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has chosen to opt out by deferring any further discussion on that matter until the report of the working group and committee of inquiry into women in science and technology has been published. That inquiry was not established until March, nine months into the debate on the White Paper, and it is not due to report until September. I do not know whether that is a means of

sidelining the problems faced by women scientists; if so, the opportunity to tackle those problems will be lost for a long time.

It says a great deal about the Government's commitment to science and technology that, only a few days after publication of the White Paper, they announced the closure of Warren Spring Laboratory, Britain's premier research institute for environmental technology. On the day that the White Paper was released, however, the Chancellor of the Duchy said:

"On Warren Spring, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has not taken any final decision."—[*Official Report*, 26 May 1993; Vol. 225, c. 932.]

I find that answer a little disingenuous.

The Government have reneged on the agreement reached last year to relocate Warren Spring at a site in Welwyn Garden City, bought for that purpose. The environmental problems facing this country are not diminishing, but increasing. This is not the time to cut the investment on environmental technology or to disband research teams with internationally renowned expertise.

Some of the White Paper proposals are sound, including the Technology Foresight programme and the annual "Forward Look". Many in the scientific community and in the Labour party have long argued for a national strategy for science. The progress in that direction is welcome. In general, however, the White Paper is a damp squib, which promised much and delivered little. In addition, I fear that some of what it has delivered is wrongheaded.

Paragraph 1.13 of the White Paper acknowledges

"the widely perceived contrast between our excellence in science and technology and our relative weakness in exploiting them to economic advantage."

Having acknowledged that analysis, however, the White Paper fails to comprehend the significance of it.

Many of the reforms to the administration of the science budget and research councils proposed in the White Paper imply that the problem lies not in exploitation of the science base for economic advantage, but with the science base itself. I strongly object to that analysis. The White Paper has tackled that problem by streamlining the research councils so that they will be staffed with fewer members overall and with more people from industry.

The research councils are being instructed to give greater emphasis to applied research. The implication is that the councils are currently allocating funds for the wrong sort of research, yet that misses the point entirely. I fear that the reforms, if applied literally, may stifle creative research in Britain. The applications of basic research cannot be anticipated, which is true almost by definition. The difficulty of picking winners is well established. It is not true that our scientists are failing to produce scientific innovations, which could be taken up by industry. Many of their innovations are taken up by industry, but the problem is that they are not taken up by British industry.

An excellent letter from Professor Roger Needham, who is professor of computing at Cambridge university and one of my constituents, was sent to the Select Committee on Science and Technology. He set out succinctly that the two things he creates are skilled people and ideas. He described, with some feeling, the difficulty he encounters in getting United Kingdom companies to realise that they should try to persuade good graduates to work for them. He described further difficulties that he has had in getting companies to accept good ideas. He wrote:

"When it comes to the exploitation of results, the situation is not much better. An extreme but nevertheless genuine case, is as follows. A research student came to see us after working for GEC for ten years. In the course of his PhD work he took out a patent on an invention and he talked to British Telecom and GEC about it. They were polite but uninterested although the subject matter was very relevant to their businesses. He published a paper in an international journal, sold his patent to a Californian start-up and is now with them as a respected engineer."

Other advanced industrial economies are keen to exploit the fruits of the labours of British scientists, but I fear that we will not realise the potential of British science until the British Government, British industry and British financial institutions realise the error of their ways. The White Paper contains nothing to encourage that process.

Page 15 of the White Paper states:

"the Government recognises that circumstances can arise where market forces do not work in a satisfactory manner and investments in commercial research and development which offer a good economic return to the nation . . . will not go ahead without some sort of public support."

The statement that market forces do not always work is a refreshing admission from the Government.

I shall describe a situation in which market forces are clearly not working. The United Kingdom research and development score board was published last week. It has already been mentioned by several hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) who quoted from it at length. It showed that the 336 British companies surveyed spent on average 1·6 per cent. of their income on research and development last year compared with an average of 4·6 per cent.—almost three times as much—for the world's 200 top spending companies. Even the 11 British companies ranked among the top 200 for research and development spending on average spent just 2·5 per cent. of their income on research and development, compared with between 4 or 6 per cent. for the other companies. To cap it all, the average British company spends twice as much on dividends to shareholders as on research and development. That compares with the world's top 200 companies which spend two and a half times as much on research and development as they do on dividends—they have their priorities right; we have our priorities wrong.

Even the President of the Board of Trade described the figures as sobering. In a debate in the House earlier this year, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster described the result of a similar survey as sobering. Perhaps the entire Cabinet find the figures sobering—it will no doubt find the results of next year's survey equally sobering. But the question is—what is the Cabinet going to do about it?

Once again, the Government have failed to take the opportunity to introduce additional tax incentives for firms spending on research and development. In rejecting tax incentives, the White Paper states that the Government's aim remains

"the avoidance of special tax subsidies which distort commercial investment decisions."

That dogma rings hollow. Against all the evidence, the Government remained mesmerised by their faith in market forces.

The United Kingdom, Turkey and New Zealand share the dubious distinction of being the only countries out of the 24 members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development that spent a smaller proportion of their national wealth on research and development in 1990 than they did in 1981. In Britain, responsibility for the decline lies squarely with the Tory

[Mrs. Anne Campbell]

Government. The proportion of gross domestic product invested by the Government in civil research and development fell from 0·72 per cent. in 1981 to 0·5 per cent. in 1990. Those figures come from the Save British Science society. That meant that the Government spent £1·2 billion less on civil research and development in 1990 than they would have done if they had maintained spending at the 1981 level as a proportion of GDP.

Much of the fall can be attributed to the rigid application of the near-market rule—another foolish element of Tory dogma. The White Paper refers to the relaxation of the rule, but it is a timid reference. It would be interesting if the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster could underline and strengthen the commitment to spending more money on near-market research.

The White Paper's failure to address the issue of resources and set targets for increasing the proportion of national investment in research and development is one of its greatest omissions. We read that Government spending on defence-related research and development will be reduced in real terms by one third by the end of the decade. There is no discussion of the possibility that, as a result, more resources will be diverted into civil research and development. There is no statement about how scientific expertise built up in the defence industry might be preserved for the nation. The diversification of the defence industry is not even discussed. It is a simple story of cuts. That is a great missed opportunity, well illustrated by my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray), to divert resources into the areas that threaten the security of the western world.

Hon. Members have spoken about careers in science and technology. The chapter in the White Paper dealing with that subject is deeply disappointing. Worse than that, many scientists will find parts of it highly insulting. There is a consensus that a postgraduate setting out on a career in scientific research should have more formal training at the outset. In that sense, the proposal that postgraduates should normally undertake a year's tuition for a master's degree before embarking on a PhD course is welcome. However, I am deeply concerned—that concern is shared by many scientists—about the manner in which the change in the pattern of postgraduate training is to be achieved. There will be no new resources, which means that more people taking master's degrees will mean fewer people taking PhDs. Throughout the long debate leading to the publication of the White Paper, I have not heard anyone suggest that this country suffers from a surfeit of people with a PhD. We need more scientists trained to the highest degree if our economy is to thrive in the long term.

The White Paper makes little reference to the poor financial rewards of scientists compared with highly qualified people in other professions. I presume that that is because the Government are not willing to admit to a problem that they are unwilling to solve. When job insecurity is added to poor financial reward, it is a wonder that anyone chooses to pursue a career in scientific research in this country. I have been married to a research scientist for the past 30 years and therefore speak with feeling and some interest in the subject.

Far too many of our brightest scientists live a hand-to-mouth existence on short-term contracts. In that respect, the proposal that the research councils should fund more longer-term fellowships and that the universities should allocate funds to support some research staff between contracts is welcome. However, the White Paper is unapologetic about the plight of the majority of research workers who will still have to move from one short-term contract to the next and from one institution or project to another, always worried about where the next pay cheque will come from.

The White Paper is worse than unapologetic because it contains the appalling assertion that scientists themselves are to blame for being condemned to a series of short-term contracts. That is in paragraph 7.28 which says that they have unreasonable ambitions to pursue careers in academia when what they need is more career guidance to disabuse them of the idea that they can pursue the career of their choosing. That is complete rubbish. Short-term contracts are not the choice of the scientist; they are the choice of the employer and, effectively, the choice of the Government.

It is the lack of a career structure and of basic conditions such as maternity leave and child care that lead to many women moving out when they reach childbearing age. I shall not pursue that as I raised it in an intervention. According to Department of Employment statistics, although 56 per cent. of laboratory technicians are women, only 20 per cent. of chemists and less than 10 per cent. of engineers are women. Women are poorly represented in the research councils. The Advisory Board for the Research Councils has only one woman on its 24-member council and among the permanent staff there are no women at grade 4 and only one woman out of 23 at grade 5. That pattern is reflected in the research councils.

Gender discrimination is rife. A Royal Society of Chemistry survey showed that 29 per cent. of women encountered discrimination. Worse still, when the Institute of Physics conducted a similar survey, it found that 49 per cent. of women had experienced discrimination when applying for jobs.

In the introduction to the White Paper, the Government have the gall to quote the president of the Royal Society, Sir Michael Atiyah, another of my constituents. He said:

"Too much stress on organisational structures may obscure the basic fact that progress in science depends on the ideas, inspiration and dedication of individual scientists, not the machinations of councils, committees and Departments."

The problem is that the Government have not the wit to understand the meaning of those words. Far too much of the White Paper is about

"the machinations of councils, committees and Departments"

and far too little is about fostering the talents of our scientists. The White Paper is a failure because it fails to address even the chronic under-investment by British industry in research and development and innovation.

In advance of the debate, I consulted another constituent of mine, Dr. Matthew Freeman, who works at the Medical Research Council's laboratory of molecular biology in Cambridge, and who is also on the executive committee of Save British Science. He said:

"There is nothing inspiring in the White Paper. Scientists in Britain are demoralised and uncertain and were looking for some hope. Apart from some stirring sentiments there is nothing to relieve the gloom. If you ask scientists at the bench what would help, none would say that an internal shake-up in the committee structure in Whitehall would be a high priority. As an ex-chairman of British Scientists Abroad, I am sure that there will not be a single scientist who will decide to return to Britain on the basis of this White Paper."

That says it all.

1.5 pm

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): I have listened to all the speeches in the debate so far and found them interesting and, on the whole, rather constructive. However, I am sorry to have to say that the speech of the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) was unnecessarily and unjustifiably sour in its terms. It took insufficient account of the fact that when my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy launched this exercise one year ago, he made it clear that it would be principally concerned with the machinery of science policy and the way in which those matters were approached and co-ordinated within Whitehall, and would not focus principally on resources, for the good and practical reason that, however powerful he may be, it is not within his gift to deliver great pots of money extra to the considerable sums already put into civilian science.

The speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste), using a positively missionary approach, was excellent and will repay close reading, not least because it demonstrated the way in which at least some opinion among those on the Labour Benches—if not that of the hon. Member for Cambridge—has shifted over the past 10 to 15 years under the influence of the hammer of Thatcherism acting on the anvil of new market and global realities. That is the world in which the scientific and technological community has now to operate.

In the spirit of bipartisanship, I noticed that the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) was agreeing strongly with my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet when he made a pointed comment, with which I also agree, about the Department of Health being in the ludicrous position of both sponsor and regulator of the pharmaceutical industry. Given that this is one of the few shining examples in the private sector of an industry that has done consistently well, without many handouts from the taxpayer, it is important that the Government should play their part by improving the bureaucratic arrangements. I hope that my right hon. Friend will take note of that.

The right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) made a serious point about the insufficiency of people with a good grounding in mathematics and a good mathematical turn of mind, not only in the House but, more broadly, in the communities on which we depend for wealth creation. I draw to the attention of the House the work of Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, which recently published a report, at the Government's behest, that contained some tragic and frightening figures. One in five of the large representative sample were, at 21 years of age, effectively innumerate and one in seven were effectively illiterate—excluding those with dyslexia and mental disabilities. We must address that problem in our schools and in the national cirriculum more urgently than we are.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), who has had to leave, spoke of cultural and attitudinal problems. He was right, for those matters are well documented back to the time of Prince Albert, who held well-developed views on them.

As a social scientist rather than a pure scientist, I believe that the essence of the problem is that British scientists are invariably held in respect, even in awe, by the non-scientific community. The difficulty has been and remains at the technical and technician level. Schools and further education institutions must do more to capture the imagination of a wide raft of young people and not just the most academically talented.

I apologise for diverging in that way, because I know that it is uncharacteristic these days to indulge in debate in the House, but I wanted to pick up on points that particularly struck me.

The White Paper is an excellent contribution to the progress that urgently needs to be made. It clearly recognises the vital importance of preserving and enhancing our science base, particularly via higher education institutions—which have an enormous contribution to make—and research centres, which are often in the private sector.

It must be acknowledged, however, that we in the United Kingdom cannot do everything here. We must not fall for the fallacies that everything must be invented here, or that everything must be done in this country. We must set priorities and ask who are the right people to take difficult priority decisions.

I believe that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy and others of my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench share the view that such decisions should not principally be taken by Ministers and civil servants.

That is largely because they do not have an adequate training and background, but also because they tend to be dazzled by the men in white coats. This country's scientific history in the post-war period shows the way in which nuclear boffins, for example, dazzled successive science and technology, education and industry Ministers over the years, because those Ministers did not start on anything like even terms with their advisers. That is a serious psychological point.

I welcome the concept of pluralism and diversity in decision making, because big mistakes are less likely to occur with a pluralistic approach. I welcomed the announcment made by my right hon. Friend some time ago of the decision to maintain the dual support system, which is important for institutional autonomy. That is the most important decision in the White Paper contributing to the maintenance and improvement of our science base.

Several references have been made to resources, including by the hon. Member for Cambridge. I put a more positive gloss than the hon. Lady on paragraph 1.17 of the White Paper:

> "The Government will continue to allocate public resources to science and engineering on the scale necessary to finance the policies in this White Paper."

Although that statement is clear, I know that Opposition Members are cynical. I take the statement to mean that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy, with the full backing of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, will make every effort to ensure this policy is carried through.

Dr. Bray: How can the Government possibly continue to do something that they have not been doing?

Mr. Forman: The hon. Gentleman is falling into the trap of being a little too sour and pessimistic. The scientific community may not have received all the public resources that it would like recently, but let me say in the presence of my right hon. Friend—and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and

[Mr. Forman]

Science whom I welcome to his new post—that I believe that the scientific and technological community has firm champions. I know that they will do their level best.

Basic science, as I understand it, is nearly always a voyage of discovery with many blind alleys: that is the nature of the beast. We must protect the work of bright researchers who are not project-funded by research councils. A good example of what can be derived from the "blue skies" approach is the valuable work on genetic fingerprinting that Alec Jeffreys and his team have done at Leicester university; another is the basic research into ceramics that has been done abroad, leading to many of the significant breakthroughs in super-conductivity that were made a few years ago in Switzerland. I hope that the Government will continue to support such aspects of the science base and the "blue skies" approach.

British industry and commerce must learn to apply the scientific and technological skills that we develop to existing products and processes, as well as to new frontier products and processes. Perhaps the most telling example can be found in the motor vehicle industry: much was learnt in the 1980s—largely as a result of Japanese influence, as was pointed out by my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink). There has also been a dramatic turnaround in our woollen textile industry, largely owing to the application of the most appropriate and advanced technology to existing processes to make them more cost effective and more attractive to the market.

We also need to achieve a better balance between what is loosely called a big science—for instance, particle physics and astronomy—and small science—for instance, product and process control. I was interested to read the evidence submitted by ICI's spokesman about the value of small science, and the number of small projects that are particularly useful to the advance of the whole. Science in this country has been dogged by two problems, both cuckoos in the nest. Nuclear power has tended to edge out a good deal of hard science, and subscriptions to international bodies have taken too large a share of the resources available at any one time.

Paragraph 1.16 of the White Paper is right to talk of breaking down the barriers between all those involved in the broad scientific community. That naturally includes private companies, research laboratories and industry generally. I am delighted to read of the encouragement of networking between bodies, both public and private. That must be right; we must share best practice as far as possible.

I am particularly attached to the idea of teaching companies—which were mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone)—and case awards for young scholars. Much good work is going on. I recently paid a fascinating visit to the university of Brighton, to which my hon. Friend referred—the university, that is, not the fascinating visit. I was told that the university now has eight research degrees financed in that way, and that there are practical as well as theoretical benefits. An example given to me by Professor David Watson is the new control system for hardboard mills, which is making a significant contribution to the success of the industry.

I welcome the way in which paragraph 1.18 flags the Government's determination to develop more taught courses for science graduates. I believe that MSc training for postgraduate scientists and engineers is the way forward. That is the approach adopted by many of our competitors, notably the United States and Germany; I think that it is pedagogically right, and that it brings us more into line with current best practice internationally.

Some of those studying for a MSc will go on to the PhD stage—fewer than before, but that is not necessarily a bad thing—with a more appropriate grounding and a broader basis. I hope that they will go on with the benefit of better and closer academic supervision than is sometimes the case with PhDs.

There is one aspect of the White Paper about which I have doubts and concerns—the decision not to create a humanities research council, which perhaps includes the realm of the Economic and Social Research Council, on which I briefly served a few years ago. That decision leaves the sponsorship, regulation and funding of research in that area largely with our old friend the British Academy. I am not sure that this was a wise decision and I invite my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to find an opportunity later to consider it again.

The British Academy does not have a glorious record in the realm of research and it has the conflicting roles of both learned society and funding council, which sit rather uneasily in one slightly amateur body. I have particular concerns about its record on studentships and on post-doctoral fellowships. I hope that the decision can be reconsidered.

As my right hon. Friend will know, there is a great need for more money for library facilities and for sabbaticals for research in the humanities. Now that, in a sense, my right hon. Friend's Department has a greater interest than it had formerly in such matters, because of his supervision of the research councils, I hope that the matter will be reconsidered. It is a great pity that the recommendations made by Sir Brian Follett were not pursued—a view that is also held by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals.

I do not want to end on a negative or sour note, having criticised others for showing a touch of sourness. In general, the White Paper is a sensible and responsive document which has done a great deal to meet the most important needs of our scientific, technological and engineering community. I congratulate my right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson), who played a considerable part in the document, on their work and on the spirit in which they approached it. I want Ministers to know that many Conservative Members will support them strongly when they do battle, as they will have to, for the interests of the scientific and technological community.

1.22 pm

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to take part in the debate.

I congratulate the Chancellor on the White Paper, which has stimulated much interest among the scientific community—well over 100 submissions were made—and in the Select Committee on Science and Technology.

I detected in the Chancellor's speech this morning and in earlier contributions the fact that he has been cautious in his handling of this massive subject. Perhaps he was a little too deferential to the abilities of the scientists

involved. As a result, the White Paper is perhaps a little too complacent. I note that about 12 of the Select Committee's 31 recommendations have been accepted. The others were not accepted or were pigeon-holed.

The White Paper is a rather modest reform document. I strongly welcome the "Forward Look", which involves other Departments, and the Technology Foresight programme, which is extremely important. Last Monday, speaking to the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee, the Chancellor spoke of visiting top laboratories in this country, looking at the visitors' list and finding that the person above him always seemed to be from Japan. We need to return the compliment, and the same goes for Germany and the United States. The Technology Foresight programme will help to keep abreast of where we need to invest in the future.

We accept the winding up of the research councils, although we want greater openness. The advice of learned bodies to the OST should be published. The Science and Engineering Research Council was too large and had to be restructured. I especially welcome the Engineering and Physical Science Research Council and echo the concern expressed by the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) about how chemistry will fit into the new pattern. I am also worried about the Particle Physics and Astromony Research Council because it deals with pure science and there is a danger that, being packaged as such, it may be vulnerable to possible cuts or a squeeze in research funding.

I welcome the Council for Science and Technology. It may have leading scientists and industrialists as members, but I echo the view expressed by the Select Committee: we want women to be on the council and the interests of the environment and the consumer to be represented. We welcome the fact that dual funding is to continue. I have reservations about the switch from PhD to MSc, but, if the budget is limited, I accept that perhaps the bias should be towards the MSc. However, I can accept cuts in PhDs only if the total budget is safeguarded and is used to produce more MSc qualifications.

I notice that the White Paper's response to Faraday centres is tame. I wish that it had expressed greater enthusiasm. During our visit to Germany, members of the Select Committee visited the Fraunhofer and Steinbeis institutes. This country needs to develop a broader infrastructure, something between universities and industry, or a middle tier fed by universities and polytechnics and drawn from by industry.

I agree with earlier remarks about the public understanding of science and overspecialisation in schools. All pupils should be required to take mathematics and science to the age of 18. Science has a rather negative image, which I can well understand, having done research in chemistry. Unfortunately, in the minds of young people science can be associated with nuclear problems and pollution and, in general, the image of the scientist is negative. Environmental research will help to refresh that image, but it is sad that the closure of the Warren Spring laboratory sends a negative signal to young people who may be thinking of embarking on a scientific career.

The White Paper is especially disappointing in respect of the Chancellor's scant influence on other Departments, such as the Ministries of Defence and of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Departments of Health and of Trade and Industry. He will have very little influence on the research budget of those Departments but they will take part in the "Forward Look", which is a positive step. I also welcome the transfer of administration of the LINK scheme, but, as £6 billion of Government money is going into science research, it is sad that the OST will control less than a quarter of it and will not have a great deal of influence over the remaining three quarters.

On defence, I agree with the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson), in particular, and with the hon. Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw). For decades, our economy has been overtaxed by our high defence budget. We need to trim it in line with other European members of NATO. As the peace dividend now allows us to cut our budget and the R and D component of it, it is important that the funding is retained in total in the science base.

I again echo the comments by the hon. Member for Pudsey: the safeguarding of that £2·6 billion might be the subject of a future Select Committee inquiry. I understand that that figure is destined to be cut by £1 billion by the end of the decade. But that billion pounds' worth of research is very much needed by Britain and the country's manufacturing industry. Much more thought needs to be given to the question of how the able scientists involved in defence research and development can be redeployed and their skills harnessed for our manufacturing industry.

I shall comment briefly on industrial research and development, which is one of the great problems in terms of the competitiveness of British industry. We have heard comments today about the Department of Trade and Industry scoreboard and how poorly we come out of it. But that is ignored by the White Paper. Tax incentives, which are part of Labour party policy and have been urged on the Government by the Lords Select Committee, are necessary to boost industrial investment in research and development.

When statistics are cited to the Minister about Britain's investment in research and development, he says that we are about the middle of the pack and that our investment is about the average worldwide level. That is simply not true. This country devotes about 2·2 per cent. of its GDP to defence, civil, industrial and Government research and development. For most of our competitor countries—including Germany, Japan and the United States—the figure is 2·8 per cent. In civil research and development, we are about 1 per cent. of GDP behind those countries.

Another £6 billion a year should be spent on research and development. If, at some stage, we want long-term industrial success and a growth strategy, we must find those resources so that research in this country can back up the great skills of scientists in our universities.

1.32 pm

Mr. Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne): I join other hon. Members in welcoming both the debate and the White Paper and I congratulate my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench on securing the debate in the first place. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis) on exchanging the heat and smoke of the Maastricht battle for possibly the more quiet and cerebral atmosphere of his new Department. I wish him well in his new post.

The White Paper is good news because it clearly recognises the importance of scientific and technological innovation and the successful exploitation of such innovation to the benefit of our nation's prosperity and position in the world. There are various ways of measuring

[Mr. Nigel Waterson]

scientific output, and we have heard most of them referred to during the debate. The number of scientific papers published and cited by others in Britain in the period 1981 to 1990 was second only to the number of those published in the United States. That serves to underline the point made by hon. Members on both sides of the House—we are not short of new ideas but we often fall down on their implementation and fail to profit fully from them.

I particularly welcome the idea of Technology Foresight. The Government have examined carefully the experience of some of our major competitors, such as Germany, the United States and Japan, and have concluded that one of the best ways of realising our objectives is through the introduction and the application of Technology Foresight—a system which will not only provide early notice of the key emerging technologies but will help to forge a new working partnership between the bench scientist and working industrialists. A key element of success is frequent, productive and informal contacts between scientists and firms. We should be in the business of breaking down artificial barriers to that process. I commend the idea of an annual "Forward Look" prepared by the Office of Science and Technology which will provide a long-term assessment of the portfolio of publicly funded work and other important aspects of science and technology.

The proposed Council for Science and Technology, which will take the place of the Advisory Committee on Science and Technology, will be given the main responsibility of advising Ministers on the key science and technology issues facing this country and on the balance and direction of Government-funded science and technology.

Rightly, the White Paper places great emphasis on wealth creation. I entirely endorse a sentence from the CBI's brief on today's debate which states:

"The country cannot afford to develop elegant science and technology entirely for its own sake."

That is a very perceptive view of which full account is taken in the White Paper.

It is essential that we consider the implementation of the new ideas of our scientists in industry and commerce and ensure that this country is the prime beneficiary of those new ideas. It is noteworthy that university income from industry grew substantially through the 1980s from £27 million in 1982-83 to £114 million in 1990-91. The number of university-based science parks grew from two to about 40 over a similar period. Like other hon. Members, I welcome the fact that the Government have decided to maintain the dual-funding system of support for research in our universities.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House and those who drafted the White Paper recognise that we have a deep-seated cultural problem with science and technology. I speak from the substantial background of my indifferent science O-levels. In retrospect, it strikes me as quite bizarre that, when moving to the third form at my grammar school, I was forced to choose between ancient Greek, German and biology and make a rather crucial career decision as to how I was to proceed to A-levels and beyond —*[Interruption.]* Opposition Members seem to think that I took the wrong career path, but that is a matter for them.

We now have imaginative proposals, not to encourage science and technology just as a dry, academic set of subjects divorced from reality, but to stress the importance of wealth creation. That is an important theme in the White Paper.

I recently had the pleasure of visiting in my constituency Cavendish school, Bishop Bell school, the sixth form college and Eastbourne college of arts and technology. I was immeasurably impressed by the imaginative and fresh way in which science and technology subjects are now being taught in all those institutions. That freshness and imagination are amply repaid by the enthusiasm and achievement of the students involved.

The Government's education and training reforms across the board are addressing some of the deep-rooted problems. My hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) dwelt on the important question of national vocational qualifications. Despite other controversies, which may not be of concern to this debate, I am sure that the introduction of the national curriculum will, over several years, focus people's attention on the necessary issues set out in the White Paper under the heading of science and technology.

Although I cannot dwell on the matter in detail, I am delighted to commend the various education-related issues and ideas set out in the White Paper. Education is the basis for developing science in this country. It is interesting to note that, in 1990, more than 1 million people were employed in science and engineering occupations in the United Kingdom. The number of people employed in those occupations has grown sharply, with an increase of more than 50 per cent. between 1971 and 1990. Just over a quarter of all degrees and equivalent qualifications that were awarded in 1990-91 were in the natural sciences, mathematics and engineering. Again, I have no time to dwell in detail on this point, but the proposals to encourage and improve PhD courses have been touched on by various colleagues, including my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman). That is an excellent part of the White Paper.

In Eastbourne, we have a number of high-tech companies. Indeed, in Sussex there is talk of developing an academic corridor. I have a dream that one day Eastbourne will have its very own science park. We have had silicon valley and we have had silicon glen, why not silicon beach? We are fortunate enough to have the northern European headquarters of Rhone-Poulenc Rouen, one of the great pharmaceutical companies and a great example of British inventiveness. It is also, incidentally, the largest private employer in my constituency.

Another leading high-tech company is Edwards High Vacuum, which has been in Eastbourne for many years and has a state-of-the-art factory which I visited again only the other week. That company exports vacuum equipment world wide and competes even with the Japanese on at least equal terms. Also, a company called Computing Devices is at the leading edge of surveillance and computing equipment. It played a significant role in the Gulf war, particularly in providing equipment for our Tornado aircraft. That company has a tremendous and impressive commitment to research and development.

Government policy on science and technology matters to those and other enterprises in Eastbourne and throughout the country. It matters to those who work in those companies, and it matters for the economic future and the educational sector of our country. In short, it matters for all of us.

1.41 pm

Dr. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Hon. Members have welcomed some aspects of the White Paper and the strategy in it, but I sense a deep unease on both sides of the House about whether that strategy will live up to, or be able to face up to, the challenges that the White Paper set itself in its initial consultation. We should recognise the needs of industry in terms of the science base, but I am deeply concerned that if our inadequately funded base is not to be improved and our budget is not to be increased, something will give, and that will be basic research, only a small proportion—about 20 per cent.—of the research councils' funding. In the long term, that would be very damaging.

My contribution to science and to our knowledge of intracellular communications was most marked in two aspects of my work as a scientist. One was when I got completely the opposite result to that which I expected and the other was when I discovered that, although a particular cellular component was being increasingly synthesised—the rate of synthesis was increasing—there was a net reduction in the content of that chemical. That demonstrates that one cannot predict the outcome of scientific research. It is important that we maintain an element of basic research. We have a good record in that direction, and it would be a great pity if, as a result of the strategy, it was undermined.

The emphasis in the White Paper on the privatisation of Government research laboratories and the needs of industry will undermine the long-term view. There is already criticism of short-termism in Government research laboratories. I do not see how privatisation will help to deal with that problem.

I shall focus most of my speech on the career prospects of research scientists, especially in our universities and research institutes. The White Paper rightly talks about problems in that area and mentions the fact that there has been a massive increase in the number of scientists on short-term contracts—the number has increased from 8,000 in 1980 to 16,500 in 1990.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell), I am not sure whether the White Paper addresses the problem. It suggests that something should be done about the continuation of funding—building up contingency funding in universities—and the need to address the level of research studentships, which varies tremendously. For example, the Science and Engineering Research Council pays something like £5,000 a year to one of its postgraduate students. The level is slightly higher for the Medical Research Council. Cancer charities and others have recognised the importance of paying researchers a resonable rate for the important work that they do. They are paid about double what the research councils pay. In our universities, people who are undertaking different aspects of similar work in the same laboratory can receive completely different levels of remuneration which are not related to performance. That problem has not been addressed. Until it is, there will continue to be concern about the attractiveness of a science career to our young people.

I completely disagree with the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he says that there is no shortage of good-quality young people going into research. If he talks to people in our universities and research institutes, they will tell him that the best graduates are leaving science. That was highlighted in a recent editorial in *Nature*, which referred to the large number of young scientists leaving the field.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge, I have a base in science and my partner is a scientist. If I were advising my children about a career, I would emphasise the importance of taking up a career that they will enjoy. However, if I were interested in financial rewards, I would say that they only need to compare our level of income—I am not especially complaining—with that of our friends who have gone into law, accounting or local government to see the difference. As a councillor, I saw the level of salaries for people working in different areas and compared them with the pay of my former colleagues in the universities. They do not compare well.

In our universities, lecturers with a number of years of research under their belts are being paid less than the salary of a police sergeant. Over the past 10 years or so, the relative pay of scientists has reduced remarkably—something like 20 per cent.—in comparison with other groups. It is not surprising, therefore, that our culture does not recognise the importance of science. That can be contrasted with our competitors.

When the Select Committee was in Germany, we were all struck by the fact that science was given much greater status and many of the people whom we met from science and other industries—for example, banking, the public sector and accounting—were scientifically trained. It is not true to say that we have an abundance of well-trained scientists—we do not. That is an area on which the White Paper sadly falls down.

A report published today by the Association of University Teachers and the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education estimates that in five years' time more than 50 per cent. of our university teachers and researchers will be over the age of 50. It highlights the real problem in attracting the most able young people into science and our universities.

Another deep-seated problem that the White Paper failed to address is the failure of British industry to innovate. It is all very well to say that the science base must take to heart the needs of industry, but all the evidence given to me and my colleagues on the Science and Technology Select Committee points to the failure of British industry to take advantage of innovative science projects. That failure must be addressed, rather than expecting the industrial and business sectors to take some of the responsibilities currently held by the Government, for example, for the payment of research studentships. The Government must address the failure of British industry to meet its own responsibilities.

If our industry invested at the level of that of our competitors, an additional £6 billion would be devoted to R and D. The failure to address that issue of investment is a fundamental flaw in the White Paper.

The simple message is that our research and technology base needs more cash from the Government and from industry. The future of our science base should be dictated by long-term rather than short-term considerations. When the Select Committee visited Germany, we were told that, in times of recession, industry realises that it must increase its investment in R and D. The approach taken by our industry, however, is to do the opposite.

We must take a decision on which of two routes we want to follow. Do we want to be a successful economy based on a well-trained work force and a technologically

[Dr. Lynne Jones]

highly developed industry or do we want to be a low-wage, low-tech, third-world economy? I believe that it is clear from the White Paper that the Chancellor of the Duchy wants to point us towards the first route. He should contemplate the reality, however, and decide whether the Government are taking the country down the route of our successful competitors or that followed by low-wage, low-tech economies.

1.52 pm

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point) The hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones) called for more cash and criticised the White Paper. In response, I shall put two hypotheses to the House. First, the key to success in science engineering and technology is cultural, not cash based, and, secondly, the White Paper contains much to welcome.

It is important to establish a philosophical foundation on which to build and I trust that it will command the support of the House and the nation. Our economy depends for its success on a significant, vibrant and wealth-creating manufacturing sector. Without the hard backbone of that sector, the softer service sectors could not thrive. That manufcturing sector relies on the science base.

We need to improve the status of engineers, technologists and scientists to attract the best brains to those disciplines and to improve the public understanding and appreciation of the importance of science. We need to sharpen up our act and translate fundamental research into saleable products and processes. The sale of such items to foreign companies, against international competition, would sustain and create jobs, wealth and influence for our people.

The White Paper was long awaited and digested with relish by the key players—industry, academia, the professional institutions and the fair-minded majority of the House. I shall adduce a sample of the evidence to support that conclusion for each of those key player groups.

As we have heard, the chemical and pharmaceutical industry is one of the most vigorous and international, and is an important sector of our economy. Last year, it generated a £3·4 billion trading surplus for this country. In welcoming the White Paper, the Chemical Industries Association said:

"At the heart of the white paper are two concepts that are welcomed and shared by the chemical industry:

The importance of science and technology for improving our quality of life through economic success and wealth creation.

The role of partnership between and within government departments and the academic and business communities."

Both of those concepts are culturally and organisationally based rather than cash-based concepts.

I do not have much time, so to illustrate academia's response I shall merely mention that the Select Committee on Education, of which I am a member, visited De Montford university two weeks ago and discussed the White Paper. The university was fulsome in its welcome of the White Paper and strenuously promoted the need for more near-market research and to improve the status of engineering and engineers. I do not have time to give more detail today.

To illustrate the response given by professional institutions, I shall quote the largest—the Institution of Electrical Engineers which, with its memorandum of understanding with the IMechE, can rightly claim to represent 200,000 professional engineers throughout the world. My choice of example pains me as I am a mechanical engineer, but the comments of the electrical engineering industry are important and, as one would expect, well structured and coherent. The profession's formal response to the White Paper states:

"The White Paper is welcome because it;

—sets out a clear policy for engineering and science which addresses the UK's needs

—commits the Government to develop engineering and science in the UK and recognises the need for urgent action

—recognises the importance of engineering (and science) to wealth creation

—accepts the need for the Government involvement at all stages of the innovatory process (applied as well as basic/strategic research)

—develops the role of Government in identifying and promoting important and valuable technologies through:

Technology Transfer

Technology Foresight"

I believe that both sides of the House will welcome those initiatives.

The response also states that the White Paper

"creates the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council with its specific commitment to

—response to the needs of users

—support basic, strategic and **applied** research"—

the word "applied" is in bold to make it stand out—

"—develop training related to industrial competitiveness".

My final example of the welcome given to the White Paper is from the House. For proof of evidence I need look no further than the Secretary of State's statement on the White Paper on 26 May. Some 18 Back Benchers were called to comment on the statement—sadly, I was not one of them. Six of them welcomed it unreservedly, two welcomed it in part and two rejected it. The eight others were noncommittal and simply posed questions; of those, five were Opposition Members and three were Conservatives, so we cannot read anything into that. Excluding the noncommittal Members, the statistics show that it can be argued that 80 per cent. welcomed, in part, the White Paper, and only 20 per cent. rejected it. Sadly, I cannot add any confidence levels to that statistical analysis as a scientist. I thank all hon. Members for their positive attitude and I hope that we can put aside petty party political point scoring and genuinely seek to move forward together for the sake of science and the nation.

Much of the evidence that I have adduced supports the hypothesis that culture counts more than cash, and adds to the evidence given by the Secretary of State today to demonstrate the wide welcome that the White Paper has received.

I should like to make three key points, giving the facts on our research and development funding record, reinforcing the pivotal position of near-market research and presenting the case for improving the status of the engineer and the scientist. Over the decade 1981-91, United Kingdom research and development expenditure on industry rose by 74 per cent. in chemicals; remained constant for electronics; fell by 17 per cent. in aerospace, for reasons that we all understand; and increased by 65 per cent. in our new and vibrant motor vehicle industry. The aggregate increase was 7 per cent. in real terms for all

manufacturing. Those figures speak for themselves. The world is moving ever faster forward and we must continue to increase our spending in real terms on our science base.

My second point is the need to promote near-market research. I shall be brief because last year I spoke at length on that issue and my speech is recorded in the *Official Report* of 15 December 1992, columns 137-41. The nation does not take maximum advantage of its excellent science base which too often seems to benefit the economies of our international competitors rather than our own. That is a component of the British disease.

The phenomenon is clearly illustrated by the comparison between the United Kingdom and Japan. In this century, Britain has won 61 Nobel prizes and registered 50,000 patents. Japan has won only four Nobel prizes but has registered seven times that number of patents—350,000. That is a consequence of our neglect of near-market research. No one body is to blame and even the City bears a share of the responsibility for that.

It has been pointed out that applied research receives only one tenth of the funding received by basic research. Consultations on the White Paper show that industrialists do not want us altogether to abandon good basic research. There must be a proper and more even balance between basic and applied research.

My third key point is about the need to improve the status of the engineer and the scientist. A national framework of objectives is required to promote engineering and science and make them more desirable. I have advocated the use of differential student grants, a redistribution from the soft arts to the hard sciences—from wealth absorption to wealth creation. That would attract more of the best students to engineering and away from professions such as the law. Perhaps that is a dangerous example in this place and I shall need to watch my back and my front.

I am bewildered by the fact that eminent scientists, engineers and professional managers who have achieved doctorates and often two other degrees as well are refused their correct title of doctor by no less an institution than the *Financial Times*. That can only be part of the British disease because it would not happen in Germany. I respectfully ask the *Financial Times* to rethink its editorial policy as part of a campaign to change the anti-science and anti-engineering culture of this country.

The Government should look again at the Finniston report, which contained excellent aims and, like the White Paper, often hit the target splendidly. These issues are cultural rather than cash based. That is because in essence, the problem is about attitude, perception and tradition. Time prevents me from adducing all the evidence in support of my hypotheses. However, I have given enough evidence to confirm that the two hypotheses can be sustained, that success in science, engineering and technology is more a function of culture than of cash and that the White Paper is a most welcome initiative.

2.4 pm

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): As usual, I have the wonderful task of trying to condense a 40-minute speech, prepared in case there was a shortage of speakers, into the 10 minutes that I have left because of the superfluity of them. I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) and the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) have been unable to take part in the debate. That happens sometimes, and I am sure that they will catch your eye favourably, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in our next debate on science, which I trust will be soon, and not in 10 years' time.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has twice referred to an item in the Labour party paper published just before the White Paper, on which I feel that I must correct him, for the record. He has described us as condemning scientists for just demanding more money. That was not what we said. We said that it was a disappointment, when the right hon. Gentleman was addressing so many issues, that some people had chosen to address only the need for resources. That is a quite different point and a different emphasis. I suspect that if he had read as many different documents as I have, he might not have made that error.

We start our debate against the background not only of the White Paper but of our economic and industrial failings. Without casting any blame, although no doubt that will be done on many other occasions, generally in the direction of the Government, I must point out that spending by the Government has fallen in real terms, from a high point in 1985-86 of £6,093 million to £5,117·3 million. Those figures are not mine; they came in a written answer from the Office of Public Service and Science.

That is the background to our debate—spending has fallen, and spending on civil research has fallen faster than that on defence. We must accept that reality. I believe that Ministers have accepted it. The President of the Board of Trade, in his introduction to the research and development scoreboard publication this week, said:

> "It is also sobering to see that the top international companies spend some 4·6 per cent. of their sale figures on R and D where UK companies spend 1·6 per cent."

There is much else in the background to which I could refer—our slow recovery from recession and the slight fall in real cash terms in the science budget, ignoring the transfer from the education budget to the science budget, which was money that was to be spent anyway over the next two years. That fall is disappointing. It is a larger fall in comparison with the rate at which we expect GDP to grow over that time and, therefore, worrying.

I could speak about many of those matters, but have not the time to do so. The White Paper appears at a time of great concern for anyone who wishes to see us live in a thriving and prosperous country; therefore, we must judge it not on its main objectives, but on what it has left out. Had the Chancellor said that that had happened, and that we might have to return to the subject and develop it, we might have accepted the support from some Conservative Members for his position. However, he did not. In effect, he said, "This is what you are getting and that's tough. Consensus means that you must agree with it." That is not so.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House have shown today that consensus means that the Chancellor must also be prepared to move his position and listen to constructive criticism. I accept that criticism must be constructive. He must accept the need for change and development in some of his proposals. We whole-heartedly welcome some of the proposals in the White Paper and we welcome it as a step, but only a step, towards a rational basis for a scientific and technological development.

Had I time, I would refer in detail to submissions that I have received from the Institution of Professionals,

[Dr. Lewis Moonie]

Managers and Specialists. As right hon. and hon. Members will appreciate, that is not a body of "Trots," but a much respected organisation whose comments the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster will, I am sure, read with great interest and concern. The same is true of the comments of Save British Science, which represents scientists working in many different disciplines.

Although we welcome the Government's objectives, they will not of themselves guarantee manufacturing success. We emphasise the need for new resources. I am not arguing, as the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster might suggest, that new resources will solve all the problems, because they will not. However, some new money, properly spent, is essential. I am certain that the right hon. Gentleman, in his heart and in his head, recognises that. Whether he can convince his colleagues in the Treasury, in particular, of that is another matter, but I am sure that he will fight that battle on behalf of our science base.

Although more money needs to be spent on near-market research, that should not be done at the expense of our science base. The two are separate and—sadly, in this context—conflicting priorities. Money must continue to be spent on our science base, and this country's scientific knowledge must continue to advance. They can be complementary.

The Economic and Social Research Council is the least hard science-orientated of the research councils, but over the past year it has produced far and away the best material for anyone seeking a better understanding of our failure to implement technology and to innovate. The best contributions to that debate are made by ESRC documents such as "Innovation Agenda" by David Smith and that which I received today, "Regenerating British Industry—An Agenda for Management." Both are worth studying, for they have much in them that could be developed.

An attempt must be made to reverse the fall in total Government spending on research and development. One recognises the economic difficulties—I am prepared to go that far, given a public spending deficit of £50 billion. However, money spent in that direction will have a multiplier effect and generate future wealth, so it should not be considered in the same category as spending that offers a lower return.

Tax credits have been shown to work in the United States as a cost-effective way of ensuring that additional research and only additional research—there is no dead weight cost—is undertaken by British companies that are eligible for tax credits. It is disgraceful that, in a recession, British companies cut back on research and development but borrow to maintain dividends. That is not the way to ensure long-term success. There could also be better support for small to medium-sized enterprises through a technological infrastructure and the provision of more effective resourcing.

As to human resources, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster should ask those of his colleagues responsible for education, particularly in Scotland, why more children in Scotland achieve science qualifications to enable them to enter into university than do children in England. In a state school in Fife, my sons are taught in science classes of 15 pupils, whereas their counterparts in England are taught in classes of 30 to 35. The same is true of all the other schools in Fife at least.

That kind of attention allows children to develop an understanding and a liking for science, which encourages them to continue with the subject further into their curriculum—particularly in Scotland, which has a wider-based curriculum than England and Wales, which stick to three A-level subjects. Perhaps that is another point for future discussion.

I hope that the number of PhDs will not be reduced as a means of increasing the number of MSCs. Although MSCs are a good first step, which I have recommended in the past, we cannot reduce the number of PhDs until figures are produced showing that we can afford to do so. We must base our decisions on information, when it is available.

We need to take three kinds of technological action. First, we should act on an international level. We should take account of the fourth framework programme, and consider what we can contribute and what we can take out of it. At national level, we must look at key technologies such as telecommunications, information and environmental management. We should expand such technologies, rather than reducing and rationalising them. We must introduce the necessary mechanisms—for instance, a limited number of new research institutes. Those mechanisms must be cross-disciplinary—not tied to a single institution, but large enough to take the best from all of them. That is one reason why Faraday centres are so important: they are not tied to one university department, but can draw from a cluster of six, seven or eight. Consequently, they can contribute much more to the regions in which they are sited.

I welcome the Minister unreservedly to his new post. I hope that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has listened to what I have said; it was intended to be as constructive as all the other speeches, and I hope that it will be accepted in that spirit.

2.16 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. David Davis): I thank the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) for his welcome. I should have liked to compliment the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam) on her maiden speech on science, but I know that she had to leave. If we have achieved nothing else, we seem to have stirred the Oppositon Front Bench to a response. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) is unavoidably absent; he wrote a gracious letter explaining that he could not be with us today. We miss the benefit of his wisdom, which, no doubt, we shall have on a future occasion.

Although I am not entirely new to science, I am a new boy in terms of ministerial office. I am delighted to be able to speak so early on an almost equally new White Paper, although all the credit for its contents must go to others. One thing that science training provides is a sense of humility in those dealing with complex subjects. *[Interruption.]* It is clear that one of my colleagues has not observed that sense of humility before. I am still listening and learning, as we all are: our approach to science, engineering and technology has not changed just because we have published a White Paper.

I was impressed by the number and quality of speeches, which was unusual for a Friday. I shall refer to as many as possible; I hope that hon. Members whom I do not mention will forgive me. If they have specific questions, I shall try to write to them. First, let me pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson), who spoke eloquently; if I had known that he was going to speak, I would have formulated an equally eloquent compliment, as I believe that much of the potential success of our policies is thanks to him.

In a famous exchange, Newton was asked the reason for his success in scientific achievement. He replied—I speak from memory—"If it falls to me to see further than others, it is because I stand on the shoulders of giants." I feel the same.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wantage argued eloquently in favour of a strategy of maximum effective use of finite resources without an undermining of our basic capacity. I believe that we all agree with that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw), the Chairman of the Select Committee, made an eminent and witty speech. I hope that he will forgive me for saying that, given his problems with the gender of the Opposition spokesman, we shall not propose him as a candidate for chairman of any of the biological research committees. He made a strong and eminent speech on many broad-ranging matters, which the Select Committee had considered before, and, like many others, concentrated on two rather significant areas. The first was the importance of science and technology in wealth creation, which is a fundamental part of the White Paper and, in some senses, is one of its most important thrusts, and the second was the importance of engineering. I remind the House that only this week the Secretary of State for Education announced an engineering bursary scheme to try to attract the best A-level students into science degrees. My only regret is that it is one year too late for my daughter, but it is an important and symbolic gesture which shows how seriously we treat the matter.

My hon. Friend also dealt with defence research and development and with what will happen as pressures mount on the defence R and D budget. One or two hon. Members made the mistake of suggesting that the White Paper does not consider that point. Chapter 4, which is devoted to this important subject, contains commitments to increase the civil spin-offs and states that the Defence Research Agency is an excellent structure to achieve that.

It has been suggested that the Office of Science and Technology will not have the clout in Whitehall to carry this through. I have always been told that it is a good idea to be underestimated at the start of one's job, so I thank the hon. Members who made that point. Our chief scientist, Bill Stewart, has equal status to the MOD's chief scientist and will play a full role in discussions.

Mr. Miller: The MOD has the tanks!

Mr. Davis: We shall see.

The DRA will publish in its annual report its progress in transferring its expertise and technology to industry and in generating income from sources outside government. That is an important and fundamental point.

A number of points were made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet), but, if I am to be fair to other hon. Members, I cannot deal with all of them now. He asked about the composition of the Technology Foresight group. Like him, I view Technology Foresight as one of the jewels in the crown of the White Paper. It is the central technique which will help us to deal with many of the criticisms that have been rightly raised today. That foresight steering group will be drawn mainly from the industrial, scientific and engineering communities, and also from research charities and, of course, from Government Departments. I know that my hon. Friend is knowledgeable of the engineering community and we will bear that in mind when we select the group members. I will also bear in mind his other comments.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North asked about the possible transfer of Government-funded laboratories to the private sector. That is covered specifically and explicitly in the White Paper. The Government believe that many of the services currently provided by research establishments could be carried out by the private sector. He will forgive me if I do not go into detail; I do not want to pre-empt decisions that are to be made later. The Government are keen on the idea of private-sector funding and certainly do not believe, as I think the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) suggested, that it would lead to short-termism. On the contrary, the customer-client relationship leads not to short-termism but to explicit understanding of what we are trying to achieve.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire North also asked whether the Council for Science and Technology was broad enough for the task. Yes; it will bring together customers of publicly funded research, industrialists, academics and the Government Departments that are most directly involved.

Two of the most penetrating speeches this morning were made by my hon. Friends the Members for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) and for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman). I listened carefully to both of them. I took the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet on the mission statement for the Government. I shall be drawing mine up when I return to my Department.

The hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray), as always, made a broad-ranging and impressive speech. I have followed many of his speeches carefully in the past because of my interest in the subject. He held out the wonderfully disingenuous option of 2 per cent. additional growth which we should all like to achieve and for which we struggle. I thought that his presenting the President of the Board of Trade as a barbarian—despite his nickname as Tarzan—was going a little far, but I understand the point he was making. *[Laughter.]* I thought that that would get attention.

The hon. Gentleman was trying to assert that the Chancellor had failed to persuade the DTI of the importance of technological competitiveness for the growth of the economy. I remind him that we are talking about a Government White Paper—it has Government support, Cabinet support, collective support, and it sets out the way in which the Government believe the country should proceed. We will fight that corner in the coming years. I say that with deliberate emphasis on the plural. *[Interruption.]* I gather there is another optimist on the Opposition Front Bench.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) picked up the point about funding, which was made by several Opposition Members. I shall also deal now with the question of an incremental tax system. He said that it was important for a commitment to be made to funding, but,

[Mr. Davis]

under our system, White Papers do not make such commitments. However, we got as close as it is possible to get. Paragraph 1.17 states:

"The Government will continue to allocate public resources to science and engineering on the scale necessary to continue the policies in this White Paper."

We have watched the incremental tax scheme in America. At the moment, we have a 100 per cent. tax allowance scheme, but the incremental scheme is the notion that, on a marginal basis, one adds 25 per cent. or a higher figure. The difficulty is the classification of R and D and the behaviour of companies under such a scheme. I do not wish to spend my remaining four minutes setting out a doctoral thesis on the subject, but I will say that it is extremely difficult to design a watertight system. If that were not the case, the scheme would be a much better runner. We are watching, but the American experience so far is ambivalent, and we should find it very difficult to make it work.

The hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) questioned the absence of Faraday centres. I do not have time for my story about Faraday—I have already told my story about Newton—but I remind the House of the Faraday principles. They are a two-way flow of industrial technology and skilled people between science and engineering-based industry, partnerships between industrial-oriented research organisations in the science and engineering base, core research underpinning product and process development, and industrially relevant post-graduate training.

This is a Faraday White Paper. Faraday centres are not incorporated in it because small and medium-sized enterprises, which would gain most from the concept, did not show any enthusiasm for the system so we are trying to achieve the Faraday principles by other mechanisms. If one wants to remember the White Paper by one set of criteria, let it be the Faraday criteria.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones) who, sadly, is no longer here, mentioned career structures and said that the best graduates were leaving science. That is not the case. There is a net inflow of academic staff from other employment. Like the concept of the brain drain, her suggestion is plumb wrong. I shall not read out the figures, but, if the hon. Lady wishes, I shall write to her. I remind the House again of our action on the engineering bursary and our decision to examine the quality of students.

The key points in the White Paper are, first, the "Forward Look" which sets objectives over a five-to-10-year period. It will deliver a long-term national strategy for Government science, engineering and technology which should be welcomed by everyone and, as the Chancellor said, has been welcomed by virtually everyone.

The Technology Foresight programme is the jewel in the crown of the White Paper. We will use that method to deal with the issue of foreign countries exploiting technology more fully than we have historically done in Britain. We have good technologists and scientists, but we have not translated that fact into the wealth creation that the White Paper attempts to address.

The new Council for Science and Technology—the forum of independent members from industry, business, academia and Government—is to be chaired by my right hon. Friend. The explicit political clout that the council is to be given demonstrates the political commitment to raising the profile of science and engineering technology.

Many points relating to chemistry were raised with reference to our debate on the changes to research councils. That matter is under review, of course, but all the research councils have been told explicitly that they must study the underlying science as well as the individual areas that they address.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Youth Training Guarantee (Newham)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

2.31 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): I welcome the Minister to her new post. The situation that I am about to describe was not caused by her but has been dumped in her lap.

The Government abolished benefits for 16 and 17-year-olds, and instead promised every young person without a job a guaranteed training place and a small allowance. That guarantee is not being implemented in the London borough of Newham and never has been implemented there. There are hundreds of young people in Newham without a job or a training place. There are hundreds who, for years, have been without a training place in the borough. I am grateful for the opportunity to air that scandal in House.

I have taken a close interest in youth training—first, through the Select Committee that I chaired during two Parliaments and, secondly, in the borough. I have kept in close touch with the training providers, the careers service, the training and enterprise councils, the youth service and the young people themselves.

Ministers stand at the Dispatch Box and repeat that they are committed to the guarantee. That sounds good, but what does that weasel word mean? The Government do not deliver the guarantee—they leave that to the TECs. They hide behind the TECs and say that it is a matter for them, but they do not give the TECs sufficient funding.

The TECs themselves do not deliver the training. They subcontract it out to training providers, but then give the trainers such a low unit price that decent training—and the guarantee—cannot be delivered. The Government then stand back, several stages removed, saying that they have instructed the TECs to implement the guarantee. Some TECs have training weeks available but also young people without places. How is that? It happens because the unit price is so low that no training provider will take the places offered.

I have continually brought these matters to the attention of Ministers. I had an Adjournment debate in November 1991. In the same year, I arranged a conference at Westminster for training providers in Newham and Tower Hamlets, which was also attended by Win Harris of the Department of Employment. It was shown that hundreds of young people did not have training places, and that the unit price, after the allowances were paid, left only around £3 a week to pay for the training. The main cause of the problem was inadequate funding. The then Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson), wrote to me on 9 December 1991 saying that trainers should take up their concerns with the TEC.

The reason for the low unit price—around £38—out of which a 17-year-old is paid a £35 allowance, leaving £3 for training, is that it was based on the assumption that employers would participate, give work experience placements and make a financial contribution, thus topping up the £38.

People used to talk about the demographic time-bomb and imagine that employers would be fighting over a dwindling number of young people. That is not happening, particularly in Newham. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) is here and will vouch for the fact that the economy in Newham has largely been destroyed and employers are very thin on the ground. Those who remain have been hit hard by the recession. Struggling to survive, they have been making redundancies, not taking on trainees.

Without the employers, a big hole is left in numbers and finance and the sums do not add up. Without employer placements, the only alternative is project-based training simulating workshop experience, but that is expensive. For example, Mowlem's told me this week that it cannot provide construction youth training for less than £74 a week. An enhanced unit price is needed for that sort of project-based training. The guarantee cannot be delivered without more resources.

In Newham, we have a youth advisory group consisting of the local authority, voluntary organisations, the careers service, an employer partnership, the police and the TEC. I attend when I can.

We held a meeting some months ago to discuss youth training. It was established that 400 Newham youngsters were seeking youth training places. Paul Taylor, the TEC's Newham director, agreed that he would ask for that number of places at a unit price of £100 a week. Apparently, back at the TEC, someone talked him out of that and a request was made for places at about £40 a week. People on the advisory group were very disappointed to hear that.

Irritated by the constant repetition of the Government's alleged commitment to YT and Ministers saying that everyone was guaranteed a place, I asked at a Select Committee meeting whether the then Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Wantage, would meet a group of young people from Newham. Without great enthusiasm, he agreed. I thought that I would present him with real people and flesh and blood. I thought that I would present him with the people whom he said did not exist—Newham young people without a job or a training place.

On the appointed day, I took about 100 youngsters to the Department of Employment. The Under-Secretary came down to meet us as arranged, but when he saw the numbers involved, he retreated back into the lift. He sent down a message saying that he would meet only six of those youngsters. He later made a number of undertakings to those he met. However, nothing came of that because the general election intervened and the hon. Gentleman was moved.

As the Under-Secretary would not meet people at Westminster, my next move was to invite the successor of the hon. Member for Wantage, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin), to visit Newham to see things for himself. The new Minister agreed to come and, around that time, some improvements were made. Sixty places were agreed at Mowlem's and about 60 extra places were agreed, at an enhanced rate, at Newham community college. I welcome those improvements, but they are not enough.

After one cancellation and delay, the Minister was good enough to visit us on 12 May last. His visit consisted of three parts: the first was a meeting with Martin Tolhurst, the principal of Newham community college. The purpose was to explain not only that there was a problem, but that we could provide a solution. The principal offered to provide a further 200 high-quality places at the college at a unit price of £100 a week, all of which would lead to national vocational qualifications. If the Minister will

[Mr. Ron Leighton]

accept that offer—I urge her to do that as strongly as I can—she can, at a stroke, break the back of the problem in Newham. I look forward eagerly to what she will say on that point.

The second part of the Minister's meeting was a meeting with local training providers. They left him in no doubts about their feelings. A flavour of what they had to say can be gained from letters that they have sent me. Roy McLean, the assistant principal of Newham community college, wrote:

"For a number of years, as many as 500 young Newham people at a time have not had the youth training 'guarantee' met. This locks them into an unemployment and poverty trap from which there may be no escape, and will eventually be a considerable cost to the individuals, the local community and the state.

Local businesses are trying to survive a diffcult economic climate and are not prepared in general to provide work placement for young people, as this is time-consuming and a cost to them."

Mr. McLean states that he can

"provide a full range of national vocational qualifications to level NVQ4 and beyond"

and refers to all the areas in which he can do that. He continues:

"The College could provide a YT place to virtually all local young people who want one . . . The Local Training and Enterprise Council (LETEC) recently offered the College a total of some £40 per week per trainee. That is typical and the College is required to pay that money to the student as living allowance and travel expenses, leaving no funds to pay teachers, technicians, and to cover overheads. This means that the College is not financed to actually deliver the training. That is not a viable proposition for the College . . . As a special case, LETEC agreed recently to a one-off support for some 60 YT trainees."

It agreed to do that at an enhanced price which I will not mention because it may be commercially confidential. However, it was double the normal rate. The letter continues:

"Unless such a realistic and minimum level of support can be maintained, we will again face a situation where aspiring young people will not have access to training, and will miss a crucial opportunity to achieve success and gain employment. The overriding issue in Newham, therefore, is the unit price paid by LETEC for YT places."

Convergence Systems referred to the

"fact that funding levels for Youth Training in the LETEC area are generally lower than the actual costs of training allowances and fares which Managing Agents pay to trainees."

The East London Partnership, a group of employers, wanted to raise this point:

"Considering the difficulty at present in finding work placements with local employers for youth trainees, can government offer a financial contribution to employers to assist them meeting the costs?"

Nadet Ltd., which operates in docklands, provides courses for 240 unemployed persons. It states:

"We were approached last December by LETEC and asked if we were interested in starting a Youth Training Scheme based here in the Docks covering Business Administration. As this was a new venture for us we negotiated a price of 57.00 pounds per trainee per week and it was agreed that when the new round of contracts started in April this would be reduced slightly by a few pounds.

In fact this has been slashed down to 38.66 per week, some 18.34 less, a drop of 32 per cent. This figure does not even cover the cost of their allowance and fares. We are already running full to contract with 40 trainees in training proving demand but unless we can very soon find placements where the employers will contribute towards their costs, we will not be able to continue with this scheme, and this coupled with the demand for YT places paints a bleak picture for those youngsters leaving school this year in Newham. If we cannot hold and train these youngsters that cannot get jobs or who have had bad experiences with schooling, what alternatives do they have."

Nadet later said to me that the careers service estimates that, in the summer, an additional 600 youngsters in the boroughs will require YT places. I have received a fax from the careers service which tells me that the current figure for those who have been on its books for eight weeks and eligible for places is 278.

Sid Hughes, the principal of Newham sixth form college, wrote to me saying that a member of the TEC board

"seems convinced that the unit price available in the LETEC region is much lower than that available in other parts of the country . . . She was also quite positive that funding is not available to meet the demand for places."

Then there is the Newham community employment project. On 23 April, I presented national vocational qualification certificates to more than 40 successful trainees. The previous Minister wrote to us saying that the Government were not

"capable of usefully delivering more places".

The Newham community employment project is hopping mad about that and it has written to LETEC asking for an explanation. Quest states:

"The YT guarantee is suffering from the same sleight of hand as the adult unemployment figures. So many provisos are placed on the definition of a young person who meets the requirements of the guarantee that I have great sympathy with LETEC in its efforts to try and prove to the Department of Employment that the guarantee is not being met. It must be nearly impossible. There is no doubt, however, that the guarantee is not being met for a large number of disabled/special needs young people since the provision to meet the requirements of these young people does not even exist.

It must also be remembered that Youth Training is fairly unpopular with many young people and their parents, mainly because of the low level of YT allowance specified by the Government—£29.50 per week at 16 and £35 per week at 17.

Quest tells me:

"This year Quest's STN training places have been cut"

and

"The reduction in funding for STN trainees, the employment of an additional member of staff to meet the Level 1 NVQ requirements and a cut in the number of STN training places means that our Initial Training Unit is no longer financially viable".

Rose Lavin of Kalamazoo Training Consultants Ltd., which runs an information technology centre in docklands, wrote to me, saying:

"I would suggest that unless LETEC seriously re-assesses its contractual arrangements with providers it may well find that quality providers in East London will be non-existent, and as tax payer, I strongly object to such monies being used (a) merely to reduce an unemployment register (b) to produce sub standard training at a time when our young generation have not only to compete with each other in a reduced job market but to compete with European youngsters.

The future of local boroughs and indeed of the nation depends on a well trained workforce and good training costs money. Quality training cannot be had for £3·00 or less per week.

The Government have to either:

(a) Produce tax or other incentives to encourage employers to train young people on site whilst employing them.

or

(b) Use the existing resources i.e. colleges, training providers and community groups in a way that through directed quality training they can be paid their allowance and a unit price for training.

I don't feel that we should be a glorified unemployment Benefit Office for young people and if 95 per cent. of the unit price is being used to pay out training allowances then that's what we've become."

I had a letter from Paul Taylor, the director of the LETEC. He said:

"I should be interested to hear the Minister's views about the provision of Youth Training. Specifically, if LETEC's Youth Training contracts were to be completely full, LETEC had no extra resources to allocate yet there was still a waiting list of young people waiting to join the programme, at what point would the Government consider allocating additional resources?

I am sure we shall have an interesting meeting."

It will be interesting to find out today.

After the visit, I received a letter from the principal of Newham community college, which said:

"Late in 1992 we were approached by LETEC to provide YT places to meet the shortfall in the YT guarantee in Newham. In response we offered some 300 places.

To date LETEC has funded 52 places, and despite there being young people on both our own waiting list and that in the Careers Service, has refused to fund more places at the College on the basis of cost, i.e. they say that we are too expensive."

The price is in-house, but the college gives high-quality places. The principal says:

"these prices are paid in other parts of the country where there is high unemployment.

We are ready to provide more YT places in a wide variety of vocational areas that are relevant to future labour market needs if LETEC can provide a realistic unit price.

As part of the Stratford City Challenge we have offered LETEC an additional 180 YT places. LETEC has agreed this in principle but only offered between £32 and £40 per week for each place. We cannot provide training at this price as it will only meet the cost of the trainee allowance and expenses.

Paul Taylor responded to the Newham Recorder by stating that there are currently YT vacancies in Newham that have to be filled before he can ask for extra resources. This is unacceptable. There clearly are a great many young people in Newham without a place, and the existence of vacancies at the same time merely points to the unattractiveness of those places to young people, which in turn is probably linked to LETEC's low unit price. In other words we have a vicious circle with Newham young peopole getting the rough end of the deal.

As I have now said on numerous occasions, I can offer and fill more high quality YT places if LETEC is willing to fund them."

There is a long list of young people waiting to come in.

In the third part of his visit, the Minister met a group of young people without jobs or training places. Obviously, that is clear evidence that the guarantee is not being implemented. One thing that came out strongly from the meeting with Newham youngsters was the low reputation of youth training places which came from their experience or that of their brothers and sisters. Many regarded them as a second rate stop-gap—a low-quality, cheap labour scheme.

Many of the places have been of low quality. How can quality be delivered for £3 a week? The Minister's predecessor, Alan Clark, wrote in his diary that he did not like the job because the Department operated bogus schemes that were designed to reduce the unemployment register at the lowest possible price. The places at the community college to which I referred are of high quality and lead to quality qualifications.

It was difficult not to come away from that meeting with the Minister and those young people without feeling that we were largely creating a lost generation of young people without work, training or hope. Many are thrown on the scrapheap at 16. I am sure that our youngsters deserve something better than that and we should be able to provide it.

We were grateful for the Minister's visit—even if he has moved on—and eagerly awaited his letter to us. When the letter came, we were all astounded by what it said:

"You asked me if more resources would be made available if LETEC were unable, because of funding, to meet the Youth Training Guarantee. I can assure you that I and my Ministerial colleagues remain fully committed to the Guarantee and we will continue to ensure that it is being met. Moreover no TEC will be prevented from meeting the Guarantee by lack of resources. At this stage LETEC have not approached me or Departmental officials on this issue. Clearly if LETEC make a case, I will give it careful consideration."

It has been suggested that money is available but the TEC has not asked for it. Why not? It appears that some money is still available, so it feels that it cannot ask for more. Why has it not spent that money on getting decent training? The chairman and chief executive of the TEC have been changed. It has been said that this TEC is the first one to have made an operating loss—perhaps that is why the chief executive was moved.

The chairman-elect does not like it being said that the TEC has let down the young people of Newham. But what other description can be given when hundreds of youngsters in the borough do not have training places? That has been the case for years and it is a disgrace. The TEC is operating in a hostile environment with inadequate funds. But it is not a tool of the Government—it must speak publicly for the people of Newham.

I ask the Under-Secretary to take a personal interest in this matter, cut through the red tape and not to accept any excuses for this unacceptable mess. I know the Minister to be a caring person. When she wore a different hat, I brought to her attention the bad conditions in Jubilee house, a Department of Social Security office in Newham. She came to see it and then took action. That was appreciated by the local people. I hope that she will do the same on this matter.

The Government have repeatedly said that no TEC will be prevented, by lack of resources, from meeting the YT guarantee. We may well hear that promise again today. The problem in Newham could definitely be solved if resources were made available. The crux of the matter is that extra cash is needed. I hope that the Minister and her officials will get to the bottom of it. I intend to keep in touch with her on the issue.

Newham has more than its fair share of problems, including an unemployment rate that is more than double the national average. When I presented GCSE certificates at a local comprehensive recently, I discovered that just six of the cohort who had left had obtained jobs.

If the east Thames corridor and docklands are to be developed, Newham will benefit only if we have a skilled generation. I shall continue to use every opportunity available to me as a Member of Parliament to raise the scandal of the non-implementation of the YT guarantee until it is satisfactorily resolved. If we can solve it, at least I shall have done something for the people who elected me.

2.50 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Miss Ann Widdecombe): I congratulate the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) on

[Miss Ann Widdecombe]

obtaining the Adjournment. I also welcome the presence of the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who takes a keen interest in this subject.

The Government are extremely concerned to deliver the YT guarantee. I take it seriously. I accept that the implementation of the guarantee at Newham was causing concern some months ago. Since then, things have considerably improved. I take no credit for that, however, because the hon. Member for Newham, North-East will understand that it was the responsibility of my predecessor.

It is worth drawing the figures relating to Newham to the attention of the hon. Gentleman. The number of YT trainees who have been waiting more than eight weeks for a place has declined from 103 in February to the latest figure of 35. It is also worth pointing out that, against that figure of 35, there are 47 vacancies in Newham.

I accept, as I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would point out, that it does not necessarily follow that all those vacancies are well matched to the trainees in question. In the TEC area, however, many vacancies are available not only in Newham but in neighbouring boroughs, including quite a number in Tower Hamlets.

Mr. Leighton: Is the Minister aware that I have received a fax from the careers service in Newham which reveals that the number of clients who are unemployed and who have maintained contact at least once in the eight weeks preceding the count date and are eligible for a YT place is 278?

Miss Widdecombe: The hon. Gentleman is quoting from a different base. I was quoting figures relating specifically to Newham, not across the borough, because I thought that that was the hon. Gentleman's immediate area of interest. The figures are the standard ones produced against the standard count. I shall, of course, be pleased to look at any figures that suggest anything different—certainly on the scale quoted by the hon. Gentleman. I suspect that the problem is that we are not talking about like for like.

It is a pleasure to be addressing an important subject at a reasonable hour. Adjournment debates often take place in the rosy-fingered dawn, when it is sometimes less than easy to do justice to the importance of a subject.

I shall consider first the Government's overall policy on YT and then consider the situation in Newham specifically. I am more than happy to take an interest in the matters that the hon. Gentleman has raised. I should also be happy to visit the hon. Gentleman's constituency, as well as the catchment area of his hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South.

The Government place huge importance on giving young people of 16 a positive choice. There are three main choices—they can stay in full-time education, which an increasing number of them are choosing to do; if they are able and willing, they can take a job; or they can undertaken training. We demonstrate our commitment to encouraging young people to take up suitable training by the guarantee of a suitable place for those under 18 who are not in full-time education if they are willing and want to train.

Many of the young people who attended the meeting that the hon. Gentleman had with my predecessor were still at school or college, or were not interested in YT and had said that they would not consider it. The hon. Gentleman is a trifle unfair to quote from the diaries of Alan Clark, who was in the Department in the mid-1980s. The concept of training has moved on vastly since then. In particular, the implementation of training and enterprise councils and the new arrangements for training have overtaken much of Alan Clark's thinking. I would concede that the early days of YT did not cover the scheme in glory or produce a threnody or song of praise, but things have moved on so substantially since then that it is unfair to make comparisons on that basis.

It is Government policy, in which I firmly believe, that it is utterly wrong in principle for school leavers to be offered benefit-supported unemployment as an option, except in the most severe of circumstances. In May, there were, nationally, 4,000 young people who had waited for longer than eight weeks for a place, but of those, 1,650 had already had an offer. That waiting figure has reduced considerably in recent months—25 per cent. since April. The positive side is that 230,000 young people—compared to the 4,000—entered YT and participated in youth credit schemes in 1992-93. There are currently more than 240,000 young people in training in England. That amounts to 12 million weeks of training at a time when the economy has been under severe pressure.

The previous Secretary of State for Employment made absolutely clear to training and enterprise councils the importance that the Government place on the delivery of the guarantee. My colleague, the new Secretary of State for Employment, is equally determined that that guarantee will be met. In July last year, we introduced new arrangements for monitoring the YT guarantee. Each month, careers offices throughout the country provide my Department and their local training and enterprise council with returns on the number of people registered with them who are covered by the guarantee. A report is made to me each month and I take an interest in each region of the country. However, for the immediate future I shall take a a particular interest in the figures from the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

As a result of the close monitoring and calling to account, training and enterprise councils and careers services have been encouraged to work together even more closely to identify the needs not just of groups of young people, but individual young people. That is why, when an individual has been waiting for more than eight weeks for delivery of a guarantee, the relevant TEC should have full knowledge of the individual circumstances of that young person. As I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will concede, some young people are not placeable. They may have problems; they may never be available; they may never be contactable; they may deliberately refuse to take places no matter how often they are offered them.

There are a certain number of young people for whom we will not be able to deliver the guarantee no matter how much we may wish to do so. But we are interested in those who have been waiting eight weeks and have not been placed despite being motivated. Therefore, I give the undertaking that we shall look closely at the individual circumstances of any young person in Newham who has been waiting for more than eight weeks.

The hon. Gentleman rightly predicted that I would say —I am going to do so loudly and clearly—that no training and enterprise council should be prevented from meeting the guarantee through lack of funds. My predecessor

wrote to the hon. Gentleman on 26 May, shortly before the changeover, and explained why the statements made by the hon. Gentleman about unit prices were not completely fair. My predecessor explained the funding arrangements and made the statement that I have made today—doubtless to the hon. Gentleman's irritation—that we believe that we adequately resource the training and enterprise councils and keep the matter constantly under review.

The London East training and enterprise council currently has 430 YT vacancies in its district, of which 47 are in Newham, 48 are in Redbridge and 165 are in Tower Hamlets. Those districts are immediately accessible from the hon. Gentleman's constituency and cover a range of activities—business administration, warehousing, retail, motor repair, maintenance and construction——

The motion having been made at half-past Two o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 7 June 1993

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Church Funds

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, if he will list the number of dioceses which *(a)* paid and *(b)* were unable to pay their full quota to central church funds for each of the last 10 years; and if he will express *(a)* as a percentage of *(b)*.

Mr. Alison: This is not a matter for the Commissioners; a diocese's quota to central church funds is payable to the Central Board of Finance. However, I understand that no diocese has been unable to pay its quota in the last 10 years.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, if he will list the number of parishes which were unable to meet their quota for each of the last 10 years; and if he will present these totals as a percentage of all parishes.

Mr. Alison: This is not a matter for the Commissioners; parish quotas are payable to dioceses and details are not held centrally.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Magistrates

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement outlining the reasons for his policy of not appointing the spouse of a serving police officer to the magistrates bench; and what other categories of spouse are covered by this policy.

Mr. John M. Taylor: In considering the suitability of candidates for appointment to the lay magistracy the Lord Chancellor must have due regard to maintaining the perceived independence of the magistracy. Accordingly, his policy is not to appoint the spouse of a police officer. The Lord Chancellor's Directions for Advisory Committees on Justices of the Peace, a copy of which is in the Library of the House (paragraph 4.21), sets out the other categories of spouse covered by a similar policy.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the anticipated cost of retraining magistrates in the light of the proposed changes to the Criminal Justice Act 1991.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Statutory responsibility for providing training and retraining magistrates lies with the 105 magistrates courts committees in England and Wales. At this stage it is not possible to say what retraining will be required in the light of the proposed changes in the Criminal Justice Act 1991 or to estimate its cost.

Public Records

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what safeguards are in place to protect the confidentiality of public records should their administration be contracted out to private sector companies under existing market-testing proposals.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The existing market testing programme within the Public Record Office does not extend to the function of the administration of public records.

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the cost to date and the expected future cost of his Department's market-testing programme; how many staff are engaged full time in work relating to market testing; which firms of consultants have been used in connection with the market-testing programme; and how they were selected.

Mr. John M. Taylor: There are 12 staff assigned to the market-testing programme in the Lord Chancellor's Department. The programme has cost £505,000 since November 1991. These figures include those engaged on the review of enforcement agents and their cost, as well as the costs of those consultants engaged to assist with managing the programme.

The estimated future cost of this year's market-testing programme to September 1993 is £297,000.

The firms of consultants used by the Lord Chancellor's Department since November 1991 to assist with managing the programme, and to assist in-house teams to prepare bids are:

PE International
AMTEC Consulting
DM Management Consultants Ltd.
Kyte and Co.
Coopers and Lybrand
Price Waterhouse
MBA Consultants
CCTA

All firms were selected by competitive tender with the exception of CCTA which was appointed by single tender.

Crown Courts

Mr. Michael: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many recorded instances of violence have occurred in Crown courts in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The number of recorded instances of assaults on Crown court staff in each of the past 10 years is as follows:

	Number
1983	0
1984	1
1985	0
1986	0
1987	0
1988	0
1989	3
1990	0
1991	0
1992	0
1993	[1]

[1] To date.

The only recently recorded instances of violence in a Crown court not involving court staff was one resulting in a fatality at Swindon combined court and a minor incident of assault at Chester Crown court. Both incidents happened in 1992.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the average cost of building a new Crown court room.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The average cost per courtroom of Crown court building schemes completed within the last 12 months is approximately £2·5 million. It is not possible to assess the cost of building a new courtroom in isolation from the supporting facilities provided in the remainder of the building.

Boundary Commission for Wales

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when he will appoint the deputy chairman of the Boundary Commission for Wales.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) on 20 April, *Official Report*, column *45*.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Water Privatisation

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the cost of the consultancy exercise involving the privatisation of water services in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: The consultancy study was commissioned under conditions of commercial confidentiality and it would therefore be inappropriate to disclose the information requested.

Water and Sewerage Services

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to change the system for charging for water services in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The Government have already announced that they intend to introduce new charging arrangements and customer billing systems for water and sewerage services in Northern Ireland, thereby achieving a more direct commercial relationship between the Water Executive and those to whom it provides services. Work is going on at present to identify appropriate arrangements.

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what initiatives he intends to introduce to encourage private finance into water and sewerage services in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: As the Minister of State for Northern Ireland said in his statement to the House on 20 April, *Official Report*, column 296, we are looking currently at the scope to introduce private finance into the provision of water and sewerage services. At this stage it is too early to say how this involvement will be secured.

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the cost to date and the expected future cost of his Department's market-testing programme; how many staff are engaged full time in work relating to market testing; which firms of consultants have been used in connection with the market-testing programme; and how they were selected.

Mr. Mates: Under present arrangements, information on the cost of the market testing programme cannot be accurately determined across the seven Departments covered by the Northern Ireland programme, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

There are four members of staff engaged full time in work relating to market testing; otherwise, staff in Northern Ireland Departments and the Northern Ireland Office contribute to the market-testing process as part of wider responsibilities.

The following firms of consultants, which were selected using competitive tendering principles, have been used in connection with the Northern Ireland market-testing programme:

BET FM Ltd.
CAPITA
Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte
Helm Corporation
Leopold Joseph and Sons
Logicom
Michael Willacy Associates
MVM Consultants plc
SERCO
Symonds Facilities Management plc
Touche Ross
Witt Thornton (Management Services)

Terrorism

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what protest has been made to the authorities in the Irish Republic about the terrorist attack on Caledon RUC station involving the use of the Knockaginny footbridge; if he discussed this incident during the recent meeting of the Anglo-Irish Conference; and what communications he has received from the Government of the Irish Republic.

Mr. Mates: It would not be appropriate to comment on specific terrorist incidents under investigation. However, cross-border security co-operation is a continuous concern of both the British and Irish Governments. At the most recent intergovernmental conference on 25 May, British and Irish Ministers restated their complete support for the efforts which the security forces north and south of the border are making to erode and defeat terrorism. Both Governments are determined to continue, and to enhance, their close co-operation on security matters with the aim of preventing attacks and bringing perpetrators to justice.

Education

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will take immediate steps to amend articles 5.6a and 156 (46.2b) of the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989 in such a way as to create the social and educational flexibility which will ensure that siblings born within the same year are not required to be treated as twins.

Mr. Ancram: The arrangements for commencement of compulsory education are designed so that children can learn and be taught with their peers, with the articles in question setting the boundaries for each class. In any class there will commonly be a wide span of individual birth dates within the 12-month range. This operates satisfactorily and there are no educational grounds for a distinction to be made, in this respect, between children within one family.

Housing

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland at which locations the Rural Housing Association has schemes under construction; and at which locations the Rural Housing Association proposes new schemes for the remainder of the year 1993, 1994 and 1995.

Mr. Atkins: The Rural Housing Association was registered in March 1992 and does not yet have any schemes under construction. It has, however, purchased nine houses under the special house purchase initiative announced in last year's autumn statement.

The association has the following new-build schemes in its development programme:

	dwellings
1993-94	
Ardstraw (Strabane district council)	6
Glenhull (Omagh district council)	6
1994-95	
Feystown (Larne district council)	5
Ballinderry (Cookstown district council)	6
Teemore (Fermanagh district council)	6
1995-96	
Derrynoose (Armagh district council)	6
Cranagh (Strabane district council)	6

Health and Social Service Employees

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* district nurses, *(b)* community midwives, *(c)* health visitors, *(d)* community psychiatric nurses and *(e)* practice nurses are or were employed by health and social service boards in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Ancram: Information on district nurses, community midwives, health visitors and community psychiatric nurses is available on a comparative basis only for the last three years and this is set out in the table. Information on practice nurses is not collected centrally.

Year	*Eastern board*		*Northern board*		*Southern board*		*Western board*	
	Number	*WTE*[1]	*Number*	*WTE*[1]	*Number*	*WTE*[1]	*Number*	*WTE*[1]
District nurses								
31 December 1992	473	363·74	150	134·12	161	126·40	125	98·85
31 December 1991	421	338·91	147	131·18	144	111·83	118	92·65
31 December 1990	344	289·80	154	139·50	87	71·17	116	96·24
Community midwives								
31 December 1992	61	57·45	35	31·13	27	23·65	42	41·75
31 December 1991	57	55·95	38	34·16	17	14·39	47	46·50
31 December 1990	56	55·75	46	42·53	17	16·60	47	46·50
Health visitors								
31 December 1992	231	205·03	92	86·73	90	82·87	78	71·26
31 December 1991	217	195·19	91	84·98	62	57·35	78	71·21
31 December 1990	121	114·14	91	85·47	61	55·31	80	73·63
Community psychiatric nurses								
31 December 1992	107	104·03	20	20·00	39	39·00	28	28·00
31 December 1991	86	86·00	21	21·00	[2]—	[2]—	37	37·00
31 December 1990	80	80·00	12	12·00	[2]—	[2]—	36	36·00

[1] WTE = Whole-time equivalent
[2] Information not available

Private Nursing Homes

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total number of private nursing home places available in County Fermanagh at 31 March.

Mr. Ancram: Four hundred and ninety.

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many of the residents in private nursing homes in County Fermanagh at 31 March had been, within three months or less of their admission, residents of the Irish Republic.

Mr. Ancram: The Western health and social services board estimates that at 31 March 1993 72 former residents of the Republic of Ireland were living in private nursing homes in County Fermanagh.

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the health care obligations of the Western health and social services board and the Department of Health and Social Services in respect of those admitted from the Irish Republic to private nursing homes in County Fermanagh on or before 31 March.

Mr. Ancram: The Department of Health and Social Services and the health and social services boards are responsible for the health care needs of all people who are ordinarily resident in Northern Ireland, regardless of their origin or date of arrival in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what reciprocal provisions were available at 31 March in the Irish Republic, under EC regulations, of private nursing home accommodation and related health care for those previously resident in Northern Ireland or Great Britain.

Mr. Ancram: European Community regulations allow for health care to be provided to persons moving between member states. The type of treatment and, where appropriate, accommodation to be provided were, at 31 March, and still are, matters for the authorities in the state of residence. Under EC regulations there is an annual reconciliation of costs between the Governments of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland and this takes account of the cost of health care provided to state pensioners of one country who reside in the other.

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many residents from the Irish Republic in private nursing homes in County Fermanagh at 31 March were discharged to these homes directly from Cavan general hospital or other hospitals in the Irish Republic.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is not collected centrally. The Western health and social services board estimates that at 31 March 1993 21 patients had been admitted directly to private nursing homes from Cavan general hospital.

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what is the total cost to the Western health and social services board and the Department of Health and Social Services of maintaining those admitted from the Irish Republic who were resident in private nursing homes at 31 March;

(2) what has been the cost of general practitioner care involved in providing health care for those admitted from the Irish Republic who were resident in private nursing homes in County Fermanagh on 31 March.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the extent of hospitalisation required by those admitted from the Irish Republic who were resident in private nursing homes in County Fermanagh at 31 March; and what has been the cost to the Western health and social services board or the Department of Health and Social Services.

Mr. Ancram: The Western health and social services board estimates that for the period 1 April 1992 to 31 March 1993 it cost £32,125 to treat in hospital patients from private nursing homes in County Fermanagh who had previously been resident in the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what special hospital equipment has had to be acquired or leased by hospitals in the Western board area in order to treat patients discharged from Cavan general hospital direct to private nursing homes in County Fermanagh; and what has been the cost.

Mr. Ancram: The Western health and social services board purchased a specialist bed at a cost of £752 for a person who had been admitted to hospital from a private nursing home in County Fermanagh. The person had previously lived in the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what extra financial and other resources have been made available to the Western health and social services board for acute hospital, community and family practitioner services, in order to cater for elderly people from the Irish Republic admitted to private nursing homes in County Fermanagh before 1 April; and what future provision will be made.

Mr. Ancram: No additional resources have been allocated to the Western board specifically for the provision of services to such people. Within the total resources—including additional resources for community care—made available to the board for its resident population, it is for the board to determine how best to provide acute hospital and community services for the elderly people concerned. In so far as the provision of family health services is concerned this is demand led and funded accordingly. Future funding for the board will be determined in the context of the many competing demands on the health and personal social services resources at that time.

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether European Community legislation obliges a unit of management, after 1 April 1993, to provide for and manage the health care needs of those admitted from the Irish Republic to private nursing homes in County Fermanagh, on or before 31 March 1993.

Mr. Ancram: Health and social services boards are obliged under the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 to provide health care to persons who are ordinarily resident in their areas, regardless of their origin or date of arrival in Northern Ireland. EC legislation does not affect this obligation.

Elderly Population

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number of persons over 65 years normally resident in Northern Ireland who live within the Omagh/Fermanagh unit of management catchment area; what percentage of Northern Ireland's over 65 years of age population this represents; and what percentage it is of the population within the Omagh/Fermanagh unit of management.

Mr. Ancram: The latest available information, taken from the provisional 1991 mid-year estimates of population, is as follows:

Over-65s within the Unit	*Percentage of Northern Ireland over 65s*	*Percentage of total population within the unit*
11,967	6·4	11·9

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Charters

37. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many civil servants and others are estimated to be involved with the production and implementation of charters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Davis: The charter approach is integral to the delivery of public services, so many civil and other public servants are involved with the charter programme as part of their normal duties. The citizens charter unit in the Cabinet Office has 32 staff.

Performance Standards

38. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what effect his work on setting and monitoring performance standards in Government are having on the people of Dover and Deal.

Mr. Waldegrave: As a result of the citizens charter, the people of Dover and Deal—like people everywhere—now have published standards for their public services and better information about how these are performing.

Open Government

39. **Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on progress made in preparation of his White Paper on open government.

Mr. Waldegrave: I hope to be able to publish the White Paper before the summer recess.

Public Services (Complaints)

40. **Mr. Mark Robinson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans his Department has to improve complaints procedures in the public services as part of the citizens charter.

Mr. Davis: We will shortly be announcing a citizens charter complaints task force with the aim of ensuring that all public services adopt the key principles of good complaints systems. People need to know how to complain and they must have confidence that their complaint will be dealt with quickly and fairly.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to place a statutory obligation on public services to operate a formal complaints procedure for service users.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have no plans to place statutory obligations on public services in respect of complaints procedures. It is for individual organisations to ensure that their complaints systems conform to citizens charter principles. I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 17 March, when I indicated that we were going to establish a citizens charter complaints task force to encourage and support organisations in this aim. We will be making an announcement about this very shortly.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many of the complaints mechanisms for public service users contained in the citizens charter programme have an independent element; and if he will list them.

Mr. Waldegrave: One of the principles of the citizens charter is that public service organisations should have well publicised and easy to use complaints procedures with independent review wherever possible. Many public service organisations have an independent element in their own complaints procedures or are in the process of introducing one. By "independent" in this context, I mean a review procedure which is not part of the management hierarchy of the organisation concerned. Those which are known to my Department are:

Benefits Agency War Pensions Unit: War Pensions Committees;
British Gas: Gas Consumers' Council and OFGAS;
British Rail: Area Transport Users' Consultative Committee (co-ordinated through the Central Transport Consultative Committee);
British Telecom: OFTEL with recourse to a service provided by the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators;
British Waterways Board: plans have been announced for the appointment of an independent ombudsman;
14 Electricity Companies: Electricity Consumers Committees and OFFER;
HM Prison Service: Prisons Ombudsman;
Home Office Immigration and Nationality Department: Complaints Audit Committee;
Housing Corporation: plans have been announced for the appointment of an independent ombudsman to deal with complaints from tenants of housing associations;
Inland Revenue: Revenue Adjudicator;
Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce: Agency Complaints Adjudicator;
London Buses and London Underground: London Regional Passengers Committee;
Department of National Savings: Adjudicator for National Savings;
Police Service: Police Complaints Authority (England and Wales); Procurator Fiscal Service (Scotland);
Post Office: Post Office Users' National Council with recourse to a service provided by the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators;
Probation Service: Area Probation Committees;
Thirty-two Water Companies: Regional Customer Service Committees and OFWAT;

These mechanisms are principally concerned with complaints about quality of service or misconduct and do not investigate disputes about decisions relating to entitlement, for which there are separate, and in some cases independent, procedures of appeal, for example, tribunals.

I also understand that many local authorities have set up internal "independent" complaints units.

None of these arrangements affects the rights of individuals to pursue their complaints through the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, the Health Service Commissioners or the Commissioners for Local Administration.

Relocation and Amalgamations

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the sections and organisations within his Department for which there are plans for relocation or amalgamation.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is planned to move a limited number of staff from the Horse Guards road building in central London to enable refurbishment work to proceed. It is also planned to relocate most of the London office of CCTA, the Government Centre for Information Systems, to Norwich by 1994.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

National Lottery

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received on the issue of social responsibility and the proposed national lottery with specific regard to *(a)* young people and *(b)* low-income groups; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sproat: The Department has received a number of letters which reflect the views of the Jubilee centre, calling for controls on advertising to ensure that the lottery will not target young people or those on low incomes. The Government are confident that the operators who will bid to run the lottery will take a responsible approach to marketing and advertising which will be reflected in their response to the invitation to tender. This is one of the factors of which the director general of the national lottery will take account in assessing bids.

Relocation and Amalgamation

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the sections and organisations within his Department for which there are plans for relocation or amalgamation.

Mr. Sproat: Most of my Department has recently moved to a new headquarters building in central London. The rest of the Department will move to a building nearby later this year.

The Royal Parks Agency has also recently moved to new headquarters at Hyde Park.

There are no other significant plans for relocation.

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the cost to date and the expected future cost of his Department's market-testing programme; how many staff are engaged full time in work relating to market testing; which firms of consultants have been used in connection with the market-testing programme; and how they were selected.

Mr. Sproat: My Department has spent £173,682 to date on its own market-testing programme. Future costs are likely to be considerably less. The Royal Parks Agency and the Historic Royal Palaces Agency have spent £147,833 and £9,000 respectively since becoming the responsibility of my Department in April 1992. The Royal Parks and HRPA expect future costs of £20,000 and £10,000 respectively.

No staff are engaged full-time in work relating to market testing in the Department or its agencies.

The Department employed PE International as its consultant. The Royal Parks Agency employed Cluttons and Watts and Partners and the HRPA employed Land Use Consultants. All were selected by competitive tender.

Museums and Galleries Commission

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what measures he is taking to promote and support the work of the Museums and Galleries Commission.

Mr. Sproat: The Department of National Heritage provides regular funding to the Museums and Galleries Commission, £8·9 million in the financial year 1993-94. This helps to support the work of the commission in continuing to promote excellence in the museum community.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Relocation and Amalgamations

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the sections and organisations within his Departments for which there are plans for relocation or amalgamation.

The Attorney-General: The Crown prosecution service has plans to relocate some of its headquarters functions from London to York. It is also currently amalgamating its former 31 areas covering England and Wales to form 13 enlarged areas. There are no plans for relocation or amalgamation in the Legal Secretariat to the Law Officers, the Treasury Solicitor's Department or the Serious Fraud Office.

Foreign Travel

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Attorney-General what is the annual cost of Law Officers' foreign travel.

The Attorney-General: The cost of Law Officers' foreign travel during the financial year 1992-93 was £7,353.

PRIME MINISTER

French Security Services

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he has made to his French counterpart in relation to activities by the French security services in relation to British companies.

The Prime Minister: It is not Government policy to comment on security and intelligence matters.

UN Conference on Women

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Prime Minister (1) what consultation process has been set up to enable women to make an input to the formal United Kingdom report to be presented at the UN conference on women in 1995; and what sums have been budgeted to encourage full consultation and to inform people of the United Kingdom's participation;

(2) if he will make a statement on the implementation in the United Kingdom of the UN convention on the elimination of discrimination against women;

(3) who is responsible for compiling the formal United Kingdom report to be presented at the UN conference on women in Beijing in 1995; and who will represent the United Kingdom Government at the conference.

The Prime Minister: The Government will be responsible for compiling the United Kingdom report to the UN world conference on women in 1995. The draft report will be considered by the ministerial sub-committee on women's issues. Details of the consultation process are being finalised. The views of the Women's National Commission will be taken into account at an early stage and other organisations will be invited to contribute. The

costs of the consultation and information will be absorbed in normal Government expenditure. United Kingdom representation for the 1995 conference has yet to be decided.

The United Kingdom ratified the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) in 1986 and reports to the UN on its implementation every four years. The second report, made in 1991, was updated in presentation to CEDAW in January 1993. It explained that since ratification we have continued to make much progress in the fields of the articles of the convention. Recent developments contributing to equality include the introduction of the national curriculum, the investment of some £45 million to support child care for school age children, the introduction of targets for action to address health issues that particularly affect women, and action aimed at increasing women's representation at all levels in public and private employment and the decision-making processes.

The United Kingdom has now been able to withdraw two reservations, those relating to the married man's tax allowance and the employment of women in underground work in mines.

Human Rights (India)

Ms Walley: To ask the Prime Minister if he will raise the subject of human rights violations with the Vice-President of India during his visit to London; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I raised the subject of human rights in India with the Vice-President of India during my meeting with him on 24 May.

UN Conference on Environment and Development

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what actions have been taken by Her Majesty's Government in fulfilment of commitments made by the United Kingdom at the United Nations conference on environment and development in June 1992; and if he will place in the Library a report of work undertaken towards meeting those commitments.

The Prime Minister: The Government are taking a leading role in the follow-up to the conference in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. We have prepared a progress report which we shall be putting to the new United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development before its first meeting later this month. A copy has been placed in the Library.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to arrange for full copies of any statement made by Government Ministers to the Scott inquiry to be placed in the Library.

The Prime Minister: No. The general rule is that the statements are matters between the individual Minister concerned and Lord Justice Scott.

Northern Ireland

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the names, in date order, of all those who have died in the United Kingdom and Europe as a result of the troubles in Northern Ireland since 5 October 1968, giving the location in each case.

The Prime Minister: A comprehensive list of people who have been killed as a result of the security situation in Northern Ireland, as well as those who have died in related incidents in Great Britain, the Republic of Ireland and, since 1978, in mainland Europe, is currently being compiled and will be placed in the Library in due course. The list will include the cause and location of each death.

Nuclear Industry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to introduce a citizens charter for the nuclear industry.

The Prime Minister: The nuclear industry sells its products and services to other industries, not directly to the public. There are no plans to introduce charters for industries of this kind.

Arms Exports

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Prime Minister if he will now make it the policy of the Government to give substantive answers to parliamentary questions relating to the actions of Ministers and officials between 1984 and 1992 in relation to the export of arms to Iraq.

The Prime Minister: No. These issues are being investigated by Lord Justice Scott, and it would be wrong for the Government to comment on them before publication of his final report.

Lord Justice Scott is free to call for any papers and to call any Minister or civil servant to give evidence to his inquiry. It is the Government's policy that all Ministers and officials called to give evidence should co-operate fully. The Government are, therefore, making all the relevant facts available to the inquiry, and it is right that we should wait for Lord Justice Scott to present his conclusions before commenting publicly.

Nuclear Proliferation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what matters in regard to nuclear proliferation were discussed during his recent visit to Paris.

The Prime Minister: Nuclear proliferation was not discussed.

European Court of Human Rights

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 24 May, *Official Report*, column *372*, if Her Majesty's Government intend to support proposals for a single-tier European Court of Human Rights at the Council of European Heads of State summit in October; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Ministers' Deputies Meeting on 28 May agreed by consensus the mandate for a draft protocol amending the control machinery of the European

convention on human rights (UCHR). The Council of Europe steering committee for human rights will now draft the amending protocol. The United Kingdom will participate fully in the drafting process. Our position at the heads of state summit in October must depend on progress made by the steering committee.

Regional Development Assistance

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Prime Minister who will be the United Kingdom's lead Minister in the discussions on objective 1 status within the European Community.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 27 May 1993]:* My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

TRANSPORT

Driving Tests

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many applications for driving tests have been made to his Department's test centre at Norris Green, Liverpool; how many applicants have subsequently passed the test; and what percentage the passes represent of those tested, in each month since May 1991.

Mr. Key: Information on the applications for tests at individual test centres is not available. The numbers of tests conducted and passed are as follows:

Year and month	*Number of tests conducted*	*Number passed*	*Percentage passed*
1991			
May	963	491	51
June	1,088	518	48
July	864	427	49
August	941	410	44
September	1,063	464	44
October	892	478	54
November	810	388	48
December	849	347	41
1992			
January	589	267	45
February	617	263	43
March	1,038	452	44
April	630	290	46
May	850	454	53
June	815	386	47
July	800	369	46
August	721	376	52
September	801	348	43
October	778	335	43
November	803	343	43
December	698	306	44
1993			
January	953	403	42
February	718	288	40
March	748	307	41
April	658	260	40
May	figures not yet available		

Note: The data for each month refer to the four or five full weeks of which the Saturday fall in the month stated.

Bypasses

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many bypass roads have been constructed since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: One hundred and sixty-two bypasses have been constructed on the national road network since 1979. Most of the 250 other road schemes constructed since 1979 have also removed traffic from local communities.

Agencies

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the outcome of the consideration exercises and panel reviews on each of the agencies within his Department, and their framework documents; and when he will make an announcement on his intentions for the future of each agency.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) on 27 May 1993, *Official Report*, columns *685-86*.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mr Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research his Department has commissioned into the impact of increases in the maximum tonnage for heavy goods vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The road wear implications of heavier gross vehicle weights have been known for some time and were reported on in 1980 by the then Transport and Road Research Laboratory. The Department recently commissioned further research from the laboratory to examine the likely impact of the changes in weight limits due to take place in 1999 under EC regulations. The first report from this study was published on 4 June 1993.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the number of roadside checks on heavy goods vehicles in the Greater London area in the period January to April.

Mr. Norris: In the period 1 January to 31 March 1993—the latest financial year quarter for which figures are available—the Vehicle Inspectorate conducted checks on 5,079 heavy goods vehicles in Greater London. Of these, 1,237 were conducted for the purpose of enforcing roadworthiness, while 3,842 were for the purpose of traffic enforcement—which included operators' licence checks, driving licence checks, drivers' hours checks and vehicle weight checks.

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the cost to date and the expected future cost of his Department's market-testing programme; how many staff are engaged full-time in work relating to market testing; which firms of consultants have been used in connection with the market-testing programme; and how they were selected.

Mr. Norris: The current approximate costs to date are some £540,000, including consultancies, since November 1991. The future costs will depend on the size and scope of the forward programme which is not yet finalised. The equivalent of eight full-time staff are assigned to the market-testing programme. The consultants used by the Department since November 1991 are:

(a) Coopers and Lybrand Management Consultants.
(b) Ernst and Young Management Consultants.
(c) KPMG Management Consultants.

(d) Capita Management Consultants.
(e) Mindworks/Management Consultants.
(f) Shreeveport Consultants.

The Department's policy is to select consultants on the basis of competitive bids.

Red Routes

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the expenditure on red route-related works to side roads leading to such; what formula is applied for this; and how much will be spent on each red route in 1993-94.

Mr. Norris: The latest estimate of expenditure on approved works on roads adjacent to the pilot red route is £2,784,000. The implementation of the remainder of the priority (red) route network is expected to start in the summer of 1994. Measures in side roads will be eligible for funding by the Traffic Director for London where he is satisfied they offer value for money and comply with the requirements of his network plan.

Rail Freight

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the approximate tonne-mileage of freight traffic carried by British Railways in respect of *(a)* minerals, *(b)* liquids, *(c)* containers and *(d)* other general freight in each year since 1988; and what is the estimate for 1993.

Mr. Freeman: Statistics are not collected in precisely this form. Data for the transport by rail in 1991 of minerals, petroleum products and chemicals, expressed in terms of billion tonne kilometres, can be found in table 1.10 of Transport Statistics Great Britain 1992. A copy has been placed in the Library. Table 1.9*(a)* contains figures for the years 1981-91 for petroleum products; earlier figures for minerals and chemicals may be found in earlier editions. Figures for the transport of containers are not available.

These are the latest available statistics.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his oral statement of 24 May, *Official Report*, column 712, concerning the extent to which certain contracts for rail freight were covering operating costs, if he will outline the basis of the calculations he has made in relation to the scheme of paying up to 100 per cent. of the track, or overhead costs, of future freight on rail.

Mr. Freeman: The administrative guidelines for the new track charges grant scheme are being considered.

Details will be published in time for the introduction of the scheme, which is subject to the enactment of the Railways Bill.

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what contribution he expects his Department to make to the achievement of Britain's commitment to reduce carbon dioxide emission levels to the 1990 level in the year 2000; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Members for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) and for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) on 24 May 1993 at column *417*.

Towing Services

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many non-United Kingdom-owned companies or subsidiaries of non-United Kingdom-owned companies are providing towing services in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Norris: One of the two major towing operators currently serving United Kingdom ports is a United Kingdom based subsidiary of a non-United Kingdom owned company. There are a number of smaller United Kingdom-owned operators.

Trunk Roads

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of traffic on the inter-urban trunk road network is long-distance through traffic.

Mr. Key: This information is not available.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what implications the recent report "Reducing Transport Emissions through Planning", and the draft planning policy guidance note 13, have for the size and character of his trunk roads programme.

Mr. Key: The trunk road programme will be developed in the light of latest information about forecast traffic, which will take into account existing and future settlement patterns.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how the planning of trunk roads currently takes into account the potential impact of road schemes on settlement and development patterns *(a)* prior to roads programme entry, *(b)* prior to the preferred route consultation and *(c)* as part of the environmental assessment.

Mr. Key: The implications of trunk road schemes for land use planning are taken into account during the development of regional planning guidance, in the appraisal frameworks which are made available at public consultation on the road scheme and also as part of a scheme's environmental statement.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria he has published to define long-distance through traffic as regards the planning of trunk roads in respect of the draft planning policy guidance note 13.

Mr. Key: None.

Trans-Pennine Crossing

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria he used to rule out the proposal contained in the "Trans-Pennine Study: Strategy" report for a dual carriageway across the Pennines in the A628 corridor.

Mr Key: The proposal for a dual carriageway in the A628 corridor across the Peak District national park was ruled out because of the Government's commitment to a policy of no major new development in national parks, save in exceptional circumstances.

M62

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies he has commissioned into widening the M62 beyond eight lanes; and what are their terms of reference.

Mr. Key: Consultants were commissioned in 1991 to investigate and report on the need for widening the section between junctions 18 and 24 and the options for achieving this. The work is still in progress and no conclusions have been reached about the extent of the widening or other aspects. The next step will be to consult the public about any proposals emerging from the work.

Relocation and Amalgamations

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the sections and organisations within his Department for which there are plans for relocation or amalgamation.

Mr. Norris: The headquarters of the Surveyor General's Organisation and of the Marine Emergencies Organisation was relocated in Southampton in May. The Department's central services will be relocating to Hastings this June. A study into the possible relocation of the highways safety and traffic command (HST) was carried out last summer, but staff in HST HQ will remain in London for the time being, pending decisions on agency status. There are no other major plans for relocation, but the organisation of the Department is constantly being adjusted to reflect changing needs.

Road Safety Audits

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how the public may obtain road safety audits prepared in accordance with departmental advice note HA 42/90 and departmental standard HD 19/90.

Mr. Key: Road safety audit reports for a particular trunk road scheme may be inspected at any public inquiry which may be held into that scheme or at other times by arrangement with the Department's local office responsible for managing the project. Copies of the reports may be obtained for retention through the same channels at the cost of copying.

Select Committee Recommendations

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many Select Committee recommendations have been made about, and how many accepted by, his Department since April 1989.

Mr. MacGregor: In the 10 reports published by the Transport Select Committee since April 1989 to which the Government have responded, 270 recommendations were made. Of these, 214 have been accepted, in whole or in part, by the Government or have been noted where no further action was sought.

Departmental Buildings

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the buildings currently owned or rented by his Department, together with *(a)* the estimated value, *(b)* the annual rent and *(c)* the annual maintenance cost of each building in the current financial year.

Mr. Norris: The Department's staff occupy 1,353 properties throughout the United Kingdom with an annual rent of £29 million and annual maintenance cost of £9·3 million. The estimated value of the properties is not known.

The Department also holds properties in connection with the roads programme. This stock constantly changes, depending with the progress of individual road schemes. The current holding is some 3,500 properties. An estimate of the current value is not available. The most recent available figures for 1991-92, on a portfolio of some 2,900 properties, include a rent income of some £3·95 million, net of management fees and repair and maintenance costs, and a maintenance expenditure of some £1·9 million.

Details of each building could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

British Rail Pensioners

Mr. Milligan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether BR pensioners will continue to get no less favourable treatment than at present when the joint open fund for pensioners and BR employees becomes a closed fund.

Mr. Freeman: I refer my hon. Friend to the response my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport gave to him during Report stage of the Railways Bill on 24 May at column 628. The objective will be to set up the fund so that pensioners continue to have an opportunity of real increases in their pensions. Subparagraph 3(3)(c) of schedule 10 would prevent the Secretary of State from making any amendment to an existing British Rail pension scheme that would to any extent deprive a member of that scheme of pension rights which had accrued to him under the scheme before the coming into force of the amendment.

Environmental Appraisal Manual

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the revised "Manual of Environmental Appraisal" will be published.

Mr. MacGregor: We are hoping to publish the manual in July.

Bridge and Tunnel Orders

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish the circular on bridge and tunnel orders under section 48 of the Transport and Works Act 1992.

Mr. Freeman: Late in July.

Diesel Engine Emissions

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to reinstate the diesel engine emission tests; and what financial arrangements have been made with MOT testing stations.

Mr. Key: Metered checks of diesel smoke in the MOT test will be reinstated as soon as possible. Our proposals will be the subject of consultation with vehicle and equipment manufacturers, the garage trade, motoring organisations and other interested bodies. No financial arrangements have been made with MOT testing stations.

EDUCATION

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how the Government calculate the funding for each grant-maintained school; and how they assess within that funding the element for additional educational needs.

Mr. Robin Squire: Grant-maintained schools receive the bulk of their recurrent funding in annual maintenance grant. The majority element is calculated by reference to the local management scheme of the former maintaining local education authority, including any allocations based on additional educational needs. Annual maintenance grant also includes elements for central services and meals.

Grant-maintained schools are also eligible to receive transitional, special purpose and capital grants direct from the Department. None of these includes a specific additional educational needs element.

Testing

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his estimate of the total costs incurred to date in regard to the national testing of English in schools in England.

Mr. Robin Squire: The total estimated cost for developing, producing and distributing the national curriculum tests in England for seven and 14-year-olds is roughly £6 million since 1989.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received about inaccuracies in his recent letter to chief education officers in regard to national testing.

Mr. Robin Squire: About 20 authorities requested clarification of the details about national curriculum testing which were asked for in a letter sent to all authorities on 7 May.

English

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to use plain language in the instructions given to English teachers in regard to the key stage 3 assessment.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend would as a matter of course expect all instructions issued by his Department or representatives to be in plain language. He has not received any representations on the clarity of the instructions given to English teachers on the assessments for 14-year-olds.

School Admissions

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to amend circular 11/88 on school admissions.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend invited comments last December on the draft on a new circular on school admissions. He is considering the responses to that consultation.

Primary Reception Classes

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many local education authorities admit primary children into reception classes *(a)* once a year only, *(b)* twice a year and *(c)* three times a year; and what is the average age for admission.

Mr. Robin Squire: This information is not collected centrally.

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the cost to date and the expected future cost of his Department's market-testing programme; how many staff are engaged full-time in work relating to market testing; which firms of consultants have been used in connection with the market-testing programme; and how they were selected.

Mr. Boswell: The cost of the programme, in direct staff costs and consultancy costs, has been some £328,000 since November 1991. It is not possible to estimate the future cost as this is dependent upon the nature of the components eventually chosen for the programme. Only one member of staff is currently engaged full-time on work relating to market testing; other staff working on the programme also have other duties. The following consultants, all selected by competitive tender, have been used in connection with the programme: KPMG Management Consulting; Coopers Lybrand, CSL Ltd. and Shreeveport Ltd.

Radioactivity

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he has taken to implement the proposals contained in chapter 6.2 of the European Commission's fifth environmental action programme of 1992 on support material on radioactivity and radiation for teachers in primary and secondary education.

Mr. Robin Squire: To implement the proposals in this action programme, a series of EC meetings was held in 1992 with the aim of developing curriculum materials relevant to radioactivity and radiation protection: a representative of Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools took part in this work. The materials have been produced and have been tested in schools in a number of member states (not the United Kingdom): the final version of the material will be made available towards the end of this year.

Handicapped Children

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what consideration he has given to extending the scope of speech therapy, physiotherapy and occupational therapy to handicapped children in special schools; and what recent representations he has received from carers and parents on the matter.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health has a general duty to provide therapy services to enable local education authorities to carry out their duties under the Education Acts. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and I receive

representations from time to time on the provision of therapy services. We consider those representations carefully.

Religious Studies

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the proposals that the GCSE religious studies syllabuses should enable three religions to be studied in future.

Mr. Robin Squire: The criteria for GCSE subjects are a matter for the School Examinations and Assessment Council. The council has now produced criteria for syllabuses for GCSE in religious studies which allow for the study of a single denomination, a single religion or a maximum of two religions. The Government are content with this limit of two religions in such GCSEs, which will help to avoid the superficial study of religions.

School Examinations and Assessment Council

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how often the advisory subject committees of the School Examinations and Assessment Council meet; and what are the dates of the last three occasions when each of them met.

Mr. Robin Squire: The School Examinations and Assessment Council subject committees, which are the responsibility of the council itself, usually meet three times a year. The dates of the last three meetings of each of the committees are shown in the following table.

Subject Committee	*Dates of last three meetings*		
Art	29 January 1992	18 May 1992	8 March 1993
Business Studies and Economics	1 June 1992	5 November 1992	26 February 1993
Classical Subjects	13 March 1992	9 November 1992	2 March 1993
Computer Studies	20 May 1992	14 October 1992	25 February 1993
English	6 March 1992	30 October 1992	5 March 1993
General Studies	3 July 1992	12 November 1992	11 March 1993
Geography	19 May 1992	2 November 1992	9 March 1993
History	20 October 1992	3 February 1993	26 February 1993
Home Economics	12 March 1992	30 June 1992	3 March 1993
Mathematics	14 May 1992	15 October 1992	29 March 1993
Modern Languages	13 May 1992	6 November 1992	12 January 1993
Music	3 February 1992	22 October 1992	23 February 1993
PE	n/k	28 April 1992	18 March 1993
Religious Studies	6 November 1991	23 January 1992	19 May 1992
Science	20 May 1992	16 November 1992	12 March 1993
Biology	22 January 1992	3 November 1992	2 March 1993
Chemistry	24 January 1992	5 November 1992	24 February 1993
Physics	17 January 1992	5 November 1992	25 February 1993
Social Sciences	21 February 1992	9 July 1992	26 November 1992
Technology	6 February 1992	26 June 1992	12 March 1993
Welsh/Cymraeg	19 May 1992	14 October 1992	3 March 1993

Admissions Criteria

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list his reasons for the guidance given in his draft admissions circular that early applications should not be used as a criterion for giving priority.

Mr. Robin Squire: The law requires LEAs and schools to operate an annual admissions cycle, and to publish relevant information for parents six weeks before the deadline for expressing preferences for applying for admissions. Many parents will want to take as much time as possible to study the information and consider which schools might be most suitable. To penalise such parents by giving a priority to early applications would be contrary to the Government's policy of encouraging the operation of informed parental choice.

Departmental Buildings

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the buildings currently owned or rented by his Department, together with *(a)* the estimated value, *(b)* the annual rent and *(c)* the annual maintenance cost of each building in the current financial year.

Mr. Boswell: The Department does not own any of the buildings it occupies. I cannot provide details of their value.

	Annual rent £	*Maintenance charge* £
Three buildings are currently rented in the London area:		
Sanctuary buildings, SW1	8,500,000	1,104,000
Lading house, WC1 (part)	168,000	32,000
Canons Park, Middlesex (part)	124,000	146,000
Five buildings are currently rented in Darlington:		
Mowden hall	462,000	284,000
Vincent house	37,000	29,000
Enterprise house (part)	9,000	7,000
Corporation house (part)	14,000	23,000
Stead house (part) (rent etc. yet to be apportioned and agreed with the main occupier)		

Relocation and Amalgamations

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the sections and organisations within his Department for which there are plans for relocation or amalgamation.

Mr. Boswell: The Department's operational work of servicing grant-maintained schools has recently been

relocated to Darlington. Subject to the passage of the Education Bill, much of this work will transfer on 1 April 1994 to the Funding Agency for Schools which will have its headquarters in York but also retain a significant presence in Darlington. Also in 1994, the work of the Department's existing architects and buildings branch will be absorbed into one of its schools branches, but will continue to be based in London.

School Inspections

Mr. Hawksley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list those secondary schools chosen in the first tranche to be examined by Her Majesty's inspectorate.

Mr. Robin Squire: The choice of schools being inspected by Her Majesty's inspectors in the current academic year is a matter for Ofsted. Ofsted has published lists of the secondary schools to be inspected in the autumn 1993 and spring 1994 terms by teams led by a registered inspector, under the new independent inspection arrangements introduced by the Education (Schools) Act 1992.

I have asked Professor Sutherland, the chief inspector, to send details to my hon. Friend.

Teaching Vacancies

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the latest number of teaching vacancies in mathematics, physics, biology, chemistry, English, history, art and social studies.

Mr. Boswell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my right hon. Friend gave to the hon. Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) on 14 May at column 578.

Special Needs Education

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the number of statements maintained by individual local education authorities for each year for which figures are available.

Mr. Forth: The number of children with statements of special educational needs maintained by each local education authority in England in January each year from 1986 to 1992 is given in the table. Information on children with statements was collected for the first time in January 1984. In that year 18,545 children in England had statements and, in the following year, 18,622.

Number of children with statements of special educational needs maintained by each LEA in England January 1986 to 1992

	1986	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Corporation of London	—	—	—	—	3	4	5
Camden	—	—	—	—	n/a	370	454
Greenwich	—	—	—	—	1,000	1,000	1,000
Hackney	—	—	—	—	34	589	575
Hammersmith and Fulham	—	—	—	—	n/a	357	414
Islington	—	—	—	—	425	414	445
Kensington and Chelsea	—	—	—	—	n/a	252	264
Lambeth	—	—	—	—	n/a	882	752
Lewisham	—	—	—	—	664	686	760
Southwark	—	—	—	—	550	737	779
Tower Hamlets	—	—	—	—	n/a	603	672
Wandsworth	—	—	—	—	n/a	1,237	1,028
Westminster	—	—	—	—	163	324	457
Inner London Education Authority	7,241	7,442	7,207	7,752	—	—	—
Barking	352	338	310	307	337	334	347
Barnet	676	660	613	605	664	629	752
Bexley	739	768	773	748	715	740	814
Brent	n/a	451	541	476	477	482	543
Bromley	794	793	862	860	965	1,047	1,018
Croydon	854	938	1,115	1,050	1,077	1,018	1,016
Ealing	654	696	662	575	702	833	907
Enfield	769	743	687	658	616	495	241
Haringey	547	500	452	392	406	396	414
Harrow	571	556	578	526	554	535	540
Havering	615	597	593	580	550	554	629
Hillingdon	565	576	623	559	562	593	575
Hounslow	417	654	768	836	975	1,070	1,020
Kingston upon Thames	381	367	349	356	391	414	433
Merton	58	163	283	466	396	509	581
Newham	738	738	736	669	732	764	690
Redbridge	708	711	668	641	632	594	621
Richmond upon Thames	294	298	313	363	368	393	430
Sutton	347	604	568	479	522	569	581
Waltham Forest	726	705	502	583	550	604	674
Birmingham	3,517	3,640	3,671	3,053	3,100	3,022	3,122
Coventry	1,019	1,021	978	989	904	989	1,021
Dudley	912	834	846	824	894	905	897
Sandwell	1,066	1,061	1,061	885	886	784	740
Solihull	133	202	282	403	492	560	631
Walsall	734	739	732	710	699	847	899
Wolverhampton	758	697	751	732	688	871	938
Knowsley	389	535	641	n.a.	506	764	813
Liverpool	1,676	1,708	1,713	1,651	1,694	1,705	1,870
St. Helens	640	636	479	558	732	785	808
Sefton	641	749	788	809	832	959	1,049

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Wirral	1,081	1,047	747	931	1,105	1,176	1,270
Bolton	632	591	600	626	640	646	696
Bury	576	544	598	727	767	834	804
Manchester	248	461	762	945	1,089	1,081	1,024
Oldham	664	591	530	570	715	863	860
Rochdale	682	697	699	623	740	844	781
Salford	742	652	547	521	496	484	470
Stockport	889	812	945	970	1,001	1,113	1,293
Tameside	789	676	714	768	847	989	1,126
Trafford	404	558	581	614	676	715	671
Wigan	218	286	447	387	1,317	735	1,000
Barnsley	457	464	433	399	400	443	520
Doncaster	124	818	875	866	917	963	1,023
Rotherham	871	886	932	900	886	1,146	1,171
Sheffield	1,368	1,328	1,273	1,296	1,399	1,334	1,261
Bradford	1,381	1,292	1,255	1,253	984	1,307	1,267
Calderdale	345	367	385	406	424	436	461
Kirklees	1,027	1,018	1,208	1,322	1,421	1,427	1,551
Leeds	1,554	2,105	1,866	2,305	2,322	2,446	2,879
Wakefield	943	905	886	837	883	881	1,011
Gateshead	608	605	517	451	413	404	503
Newcastle upon Tyne	864	847	837	866	929	894	948
North Tyneside	602	620	669	690	743	858	888
South Tyneside	422	450	494	501	498	515	497
Sunderland	1,002	959	898	881	963	986	1,107
Isles of Scilly	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Avon	6,454	3,595	3,492	3,673	3,779	4,183	4,131
Bedfordshire	1,576	1,440	1,500	1,137	1,502	1,544	1,893
Berkshire	2,252	2,220	1,995	1,946	2,163	2,314	2,4507
Buckinghamshire	2,661	2,641	2,662	2,752	2,804	3,195	3,413
Cambridgeshire	1,928	1,193	1,619	1,388	1,699	1,376	1,745
Cheshire	3,373	3,244	3,279	3,398	3,478	3,407	3,798
Cleveland	2,276	2,224	2,323	2,253	2,286	2,267	2,272
Cornwall	1,109	1,308	1,417	1,492	1,832	1,869	2,152
Cumbria	1,235	1,365	1,558	1,510	1,511	1,708	2,049
Derbyshire	2,919	3,265	3,065	3,025	3,173	3,351	3,945
Devon	2,918	3,098	3,279	3,592	3,968	4,297	4,704
Dorset	1,681	1,844	1,940	1,940	1,926	1,848	2,151
Durham	1,646	1,445	1,654	1,656	1,818	1,886	1,938
East Sussex	1,747	1,734	1,792	1,714	1,695	1,719	1,888
Essex	4,674	4,468	4,624	4,965	4,705	4,551	4,923
Gloucestershire	217	627	563	869	973	1,184	1,477
Hampshire	5,303	4,913	5,153	5,122	5,437	7,011	7,048
Hereford and Worcester	52	127	235	412	592	956	1,197
Hertfordshire	3,446	3,534	4,086	4,095	3,633	3,693	3,806
Humberside	2,319	2,190	2,077	2,020	1,968	1,998	2,207
Isle of Wight	337	332	351	349	394	384	378
Kent	4,934	4,554	5,005	4,120	4,713	4,712	5,962
Lancashire	4,154	4,262	4,104	4,433	4,997	5,406	5,950
Leicestershire	1,725	1,716	1,826	1,571	2,172	2,299	2,592
Lincolnshire	1,972	1,936	1,942	1,995	2,091	2,307	2,534
Norfolk	1,695	1,934	2,114	2,350	2,648	2,725	2,732
North Yorkshire	1,748	1,756	1,653	2,125	2,159	2,210	2,238
Northamptonshire	1,754	1,607	1,345	473	1,594	1,840	1,847
Northumberland	874	885	880	907	914	869	1,016
Nottinghamshire	2,531	2,398	2,334	2,342	2,294	2,101	1,914
Oxfordshire	968	892	827	805	746	904	1,078
Shropshire	1,145	1,173	1,316	1,525	1,665	1,756	2,004
Somerset	1,319	1,727	1,973	2,129	1,952	1,924	1,052
Staffordshire	2,628	2,792	2,694	2,703	2,760	3,006	3,400
Suffolk	1,598	1,609	1,799	2,134	2,333	2,386	2,384
Surrey	3,355	3,341	3,532	3,694	3,674	3,921	4,172
Warwickshire	1,639	1,626	1,745	1,582	1,671	1,627	1,600
West Sussex	1,254	1,308	1,346	1,389	1,355	1,407	1,555
Wiltshire	1,862	1,886	2,125	2,344	2,512	2,863	3,299
England	135,303	134,908	138,067	138,679	142,618	154,743	165,095

na = no return received.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what measures and resources he will make available to reduce the age at which children with special educational needs are identified.

Mr. Forth: The Education Bill currently before Parliament requires the Secretary of State to issue a code of practice giving practical guidance to schools, local education authorities and others on the exercise of their responsibilities towards all pupils with special educational needs and to which they must have regard. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State said on 29 April in another place that a guiding principle of the code of practice would be that the needs of all children with special educational

needs—of school age and pre-school age—should be identified and assessed as early as possible and as quickly as is consistent with thoroughness. It would also promote the principle that the early identification of special educational needs and early action to address those needs can be the most effective means of preventing or alleviating later difficulties. We shall be consulting fully on the draft code which will then be subject to the affirmative resolution procedures of Parliament before it can be issued. The Education Bill also carries forward the powers of LEAs to assess and make statements for children under two and the duties of DHAs and national health service trusts towards children under five who may have special educational needs.

Student Loans

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many students in the United Kingdom have taken up loans for each year since the loans system began.

Mr. Boswell: This is a matter for the Student Loans Company. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Council Tax

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how the Council Tax (Exempt Dwellings) Order 1992 applies to *(a)* self-catering accommodation which is owned or managed by an educational institution and *(b)* halls of residence.

Mr. Boswell: Under the Council Tax (Exempt Dwellings) Order 1992, as amended, dwellings comprising student halls of residence, which can include self-catering accommodation, are exempt from the council tax if they are provided predominantly for the accommodation of students and they are either owned or managed by an educational institution or are the subject of an agreement allowing such an institution to nominate the majority of the persons to occupy the accommodation provided.

College Fees

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to change the basis for calculating grants for college fees at Oxford and Cambridge.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend has no plans to change the basis for determining the level of college fees at Oxford and Cambridge.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Clenbuterol

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on clenbuterol usage in beef production.

Mr. Soames: Clenbuterol is one of the family of beta-agonist drugs. It is the active ingredient in five veterinary medicines licensed in the United Kingdom for use in treating respiratory ailments in cattle and horses and as an aid to cattle at the time of calving. They are available only on prescription from a veterinary surgeon. When fed to cattle at high dosages, clenbuterol has been found to improve the lean content of the carcase. Clenbuterol has not been licensed in the United Kingdom or any other member state for such a purpose and any such use would therefore be illegal.

Surveillance for residues of clenbuterol in meat is carried out in Great Britain under the national surveillance scheme for live animals and fresh meat on farms and in slaughterhouses. No clenbuterol positives have been identified from samples taken under this scheme in Great Britain since testing for clenbuterol began in August 1989.

Separate arrangements, directed at retail and wholesale premises, cover both imported and domestic supplies of meat and two clenbuterol positive samples were reported in 1992. Neither was likely to have posed any threat to human health, but it was not possible to establish whether the samples originated in Great Britain or elsewhere. Because of the evidence of abuse of clenbuterol outside Great Britain, surveillance is being increased this year.

A number of reports of illegal sale of clenbuterol in Great Britain have been investigated in the past 18 months, but our inquiries have not produced any evidence to support the allegations.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will outline the steps taken to *(a)* prevent meat with clenbuterol in it from entering the country and *(b)* prevent clenbuterol from being used in meat in Britain.

Mr. Soames: All member states are required to submit to the Commission annually details of their national plans for the examination for residues, including clenbuterol, in live animals and fresh meat. Similar arrangements apply in respect of third countries importing meat into the Community.

Ongoing surveillance in Great Britain for clenbuterol in imported meat is carried out under a scheme, co-ordinated by the working party on veterinary residues in animal products, which is directed at retail and wholesale premises, and extends to both imported and domestic supplies. Because of the evidence of abuse of clenbuterol outside Great Britain, surveillance is being increased this year. A new sampling programme for imported meat will also commence shortly under which samples of imported bovine tissues will be collected and analysed for clenbuterol residues.

In Great Britain, under the Animals, Meat and Meat Products (Examination for Residues and Maximum Residue Limits) Regulations 1991, as amended, it is an offence to sell or supply for slaughter for human consumption, an animal which has been administered clenbuterol illegally for growth promotion purposes.

No prosecutions have been taken under this provision. A number of reports of illegal sale of clenbuterol in Great Britain have been investigated in the past 18 months, but our inquiries have not produced any evidence to support the allegations.

Set-aside Payments

Mr. Cox: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much money was paid to farmers in England and Wales in set-aside payments in each of the last three years.

Mr. Jack: The total amount of set-aside payments to farmers in England and Wales in each of the last three years is given in the table. No payments have yet been made in respect of land set aside under the arable area payments scheme this year.

	£
1990-91	15,533,000
1991-92	20,654,000
1992-93	26,038,000

Note: Payments in 1990-91 and 1991-92 were under the Five Year Scheme. Payments in 1992-93 were under the Five Year and One Year Schemes.

Brazilian Beef

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many tonnes of beef, representing what proportion of United Kingdom beef consumption, are imported from Brazil.

Mr. Jack: The proportion of beef consumed in the United Kingdom in 1992 imported as fresh, chilled or frozen beef from Brazil was 0·68 per cent., representing 6,758 tonnes.

Integrated Administration and Control Scheme

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the information on land ownership and occupation obtained by his staff from IACS claim forms will be made available to local authority rights of way officers carrying out statutory duties.

Mr. Jack: No. The information obtained from IACS application forms will not be used for purposes other than those for which it was sought unless the applicant gives his consent.

Plastic Food Containers

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals his Department has to introduce regulations requiring food manufacturers to carry out laboratory tests on all plastic food containers.

Mr. Soames: The Department has no such plans. All food contact plastics must comply with regulations which lay down certain compositional and other technical requirements. These controls exist to ensure that food safety is not compromised by the migration of chemicals from packaging into food. Food manufacturers need to ensure that contact materials meet the regulations, but they are not required to undertake laboratory tests on every container.

Bovine Tuberculosis

Mr. Roger Evans: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent research he has commissioned on transmissions by badgers of bovine tuberculosis to farm animals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The Department is funding a range of studies on bovine TB and badgers which includes work based in the Gloucestershire study area on the mode of disease transmission from badgers to cattle.

Relocation and Amalgamations

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the sections and organisations within his Department for which there are plans for relocation or amalgamation.

Mr. Jack: As announced last year, the Department intends to relocate some 600 headquarters posts and its central science laboratory to the York area over the next three years. The former will include work on pesticides safety and plant health, statistical and financial services, and areas of personnel management and other common services.

In January 1993, ADAS announced plans to withdraw from 12 local offices between April and October 1993. At the same time, it announced plans to relocate and amalgamate a number of laboratories as part of an overall rationalisation programme. This programme is now being implemented.

My right hon. Friend the former Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announced in March this year, *Official Report*, 31 March, columns *249-50*, that it was intended to merge the food science laboratory, Norwich and the Torry research station, Aberdeen with the existing Central Science Laboratory Agency with effect from 1 April 1994. There are no plans to move the laboratories at Norwich and Aberdeen from their present locations.

Bananas

Mr. Page: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps she has taken in the discussions on the new proposed banana regime to ensure that the differences in the mechanisms of the United Kingdom banana market is reflected in the allocation of import licence quotas.

Mr. Jack: Negotiations on the detailed arrangements for the new Community banana regime are continuing in Brussels and the United Kingdom is contributing actively to these discussions. The regulations implementing the new arrangements will need to take account of the complexity of the current market arrangements in all member states.

Mr. Page: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps are being taken in the negotiations of the new proposed banana regime to ensure increased competition opportunities.

Mr. Jack: The completion of the single market in bananas will expand access to the hitherto restricted markets of some member states and increase competition across the European banana market. Fruit entered into free circulation in one member state may in future be traded freely across the Community. Of the tariff quota of 2·0 million tonnes for imports of third country bananas, 3·5 per cent. will be set aside for newcomers who have begun trading in these bananas since 1992.

Mr. Page: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consideration is being given to the latest trading histories of companies in 1991-92 in allocating licences for the import of bananas.

Mr. Jack: Council regulation (EEC) 404/93 establishing a common organisation of the Community banana

market provides for the allocation of licences to import third-country bananas, within a reduced tariff quota of 2·0 million tonnes, on the basis of a three-year average of past trade. Initially, the reference period is 1989 to 1991, but it will be rolled forward annually in subsequent years. Thus it will in time take account of the trading histories of companies in all the years leading up to the implementation of the new arrangements.

Mr. Page: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many representations her Department has received from independent banana ripening companies on the proposed new EC banana regime.

Mr. Jack: The Government have received a wide range of representations from interested parties at all stages in the marketing of bananas. This has included a significant number of independent banana ripeners.

Mr. Page: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made in negotiations on the proposed new EC banana regime to ensure the United Kingdom's historic allocation of quotas is not replicated.

Mr. Jack: Discussion of the detailed arrangements for the new harmonised Community banana regime is continuing in Brussels. The new arrangements will apply in all member states and entitlement to licence within the reduced-tariff quota of 2·0 million tonnes for imports of third country bananas will be subject to criteria to be defined in Commission implementing regulations.

Fishing Restrictions

Mr. Beith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what she estimates will be the annual cost to public funds of administering days-at-sea restrictions.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which my predecessor gave the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) on 24 March, column *636*.

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the cost to date and the expected future cost of her Department's market-testing programme; how many staff are engaged full time in work relating to market testing; which firms of consultants have been used in connection with the market-testing programme; and how they were selected.

Mr. Jack: The cost to date of the Department's market testing programme is estimated to be some £1,120,000 including external consultancy support. Plans for the future are still under consideration.

The number of full-time staff in the market testing unit is currently 17. But a further 175 staff in various other parts of the Department have contributed to the programme either in the identification of candidates for market testing or in the actual conduct of tests and the activities associated with them.

The following firms of consultants have been used by the Department as part of its market testing programme since November 1991:

Amtec Consulting;
Capita Management Consultancy;
Coopers and Lybrand;
Ernst and Young;
Gould Consultants;
Hoskyns Group;
Leopold Joseph and Sons Ltd.

In addition, a number of self-employed purchasing specialists have been used by the Department. Consultancy services have been acquired in full accordance with the purchasing principles laid down in chapter 31 of "Government Accounting."

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases of BSE were confirmed in England for each quarter since 1987.

Mr. Soames: There were 827 cases of BSE confirmed in England before the disease become notifiable on 21 June 1988. Since then the number of confirmed cases in England by date of report to the Ministry for each quarter is as follows:

	Number
1988	
[1]Quarter 3	899
Quarter 4	1,105
1989	
Quarter 1	1,448
Quarter 2	1,334
Quarter 3	1,630
Quarter 4	2,010
1990	
Quarter 1	3,272
Quarter 2	2,941
Quarter 3	2,903
Quarter 4	3,496
1991	
Quarter 1	4,694
Quarter 2	4,514
Quarter 3	5,700
Quarter 4	7,077
1992	
Quarter 1	8,419
Quarter 2	6,822
Quarter 3	7,425
Quarter 4	8,301
1993	
Quarter 1	[2]7,588

[1] 21 June 1988 to 30 September 1988.
[2] This figure is incomplete as not all suspects reported in this quarter have been slaughtered or confirmed.

EC Potato Regime

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on a European potato regime.

Mr. Jack: The proposal is set out in COM(92)185 final, published on 17 December 1992. The December Agriculture Council decided to consider it further with the addition of provision for marketing standards, as soon as the European Parliament had given its opinion. That opinion was delivered in April. The amended proposal came before the May Council of Ministers, where it did not prove possible to reach agreement. It was therefore referred back to the special committee for agriculture for further work.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Profit-related Pay

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, further to his answer of 17 May, *Official Report*, column *13*, what studies his Department is making of the cost and effectiveness of profit-related pay schemes.

Mr. Dorrell: Ministers keep the cost and effectiveness of the tax relief for profit-related pay under review, and the current Inland Revenue management plan, published on 14 May, contains proposals for an independent study of the effects of PRP schemes.

Pensions

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for each of the main pension schemes and pension arrangements covering public sector employees *(a)* retirement ages for (i) men and (ii) women, *(b)* from what date widows' benefits are included, *(c)* the proportion of salary payable on retirement after full service and *(d)* the number of years' service which is treated as full service.

Mr. Portillo: The information requested for the main public service pension schemes is as follows:

Scheme	*(a) Normal retirement age*		*(b) Date from which widow's benefits are included*	*(c) Personal benefits*		*(d) Maximum pensionable service*
	Men	*Women*		*Pension*	*Lump sum*	
Principal civil service pension scheme	60	60	1949	$\frac{1}{80}$ of final pensionable pay per year of service	3 times pension	40 years by 60, 45 years by 65
Teachers' pension scheme	60	60	[5]1972	$\frac{1}{80}$ of final pensionable pay per year of service	3 times pension	40 years by 60, 45 years by 65
Local government	[1]60-65	[1]60-65	1953	$\frac{1}{80}$ of final pensionable pay per year of service	3 times pension[2]	40 years by 60, 45 years by 65
NHS pension scheme						
Officers	60	[3]60	1948	$\frac{1}{80}$ of final pensionable pay per year of service	3 times pension[2]	40 years by 60, 45 years by 65
Medical and dental practitioners	60	60	1948	1·4 per cent. of earnings revalued	3 times pension[2]	40 years by 60, 45 years by 65
Mental health officers	55	55	1948	(a) service up to 20 years: $\frac{1}{80}$ (b) service in excess of 20 years: $\frac{2}{80}$ of final pensionable pay per complete year of service	3 times pension[2]	30 years by 55 Overall maximum of 33 years
Police pension scheme	[4]48-55	[4]48-55	1921	(a) service up to 20 years: $\frac{1}{60}$ (b) service in excess of 20 years: $\frac{2}{60}$ of final pensionable pay per year of service	By commuting portion of pension	30 years
Firefighters pension scheme	[4]50-55	[4]50-55	[6]1948	(a) service up to 20 years: $\frac{1}{60}$ (b) service in excess of 20 years: $\frac{2}{60}$ of final pensionable pay per year of service	By commuting portion of pension	30 years
Armed Forces pension scheme						
Officers and warrant officers	37-55	37-55	Before 1919	28·5 per cent. of representative pay after 16 years rising to 48·5 per cent. after 34 years	3 times pension	34 years
Other ranks	40-55	40-55	1950	31·833 per cent. of representative pay after 22 years rising to 48·5 per cent. after 37 years	3 times pension	37 years

[1] From age 60, subject to completion of 25 years of service.
[2] Lump sum reduced for married men in respect of their pre-1972 service as contribution to provide half rate widow's pension.
[3] Female nurses may retire on unreduced benefits from age 55, subject to certain conditions.
[4] Normal retirement age is dependent upon length of service. Police inspectors and above may serve beyond age 55.
[5] From 1966 to 1972 the scheme provided for widow's benefits on a voluntary basis.
[6] Between 1925 and 1948 the widows of firefighters who died or retired as a result of injury sustained on duty received a pension.

Relocation Expenses

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consultations he has had on the proposed reform of tax relief on relocation expenses.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) on 26 May 1993 at columns *573-74*.

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what guidance his Department has given to other Departments on the arrangements for the taxation of relocation expenses incurred by civil servants.

Mr. Dorrell: The Inland Revenue has explained to Departments the details of the Finance Bill provisions on relocation expenses and how they will work in practice.

Vineyards

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to reduce the Customs and Excise regulatory regime of English vineyards to the levels enjoyed by wine makers in other EC countries.

Sir John Cope: The regulatory regime operated by Customs and Excise on English vineyards is commensurate to the amount of revenue at risk.

Customs and Excise are undertaking a programme of rationalisation and simplification in the excise field. The aim is to meet revenue requirements by making full use of traders' own commercial accounting and security arrangements in place of officially designated records and practices. Visiting staff will exercise control primarily by auditing traders' systems to ensure that they provide adequate protection for the Revenue. Physical checks on stocks and operations will be targeted according to perceived risk. Most traders will be visited much less frequently than at present. A number of changes along these lines have already been extended to the control of United Kingdom wine producers.

Taxation

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the total tax liability of taxpayers in 1993-94, excluding all tax reliefs and allowances other than personal allowance, married couples' allowance, age-related allowances, additional personal allowance, widow's bereavement allowance, blind person's allowance and qualifying interest on loans for purchase or improvement of owner-occupied property, broken down into the top and bottom *(a)* percentile, *(b)* 5 per cent., *(c)* decile, *(d)* quintile and *(e)* half of taxpayers.

Mr. Dorrell: Estimates of the tax liabilities are shown in the table. No account has been taken of any behavioural changes which might result from the restriction of the reliefs.

Quintile group of taxpayers[1]	*Tax liability £ billion*
Bottom 5 per cent.	0·1
Bottom 10 per cent.	0·3
Bottom 20 per cent.	1·1
Bottom 50 per cent.	8·7
Top 50 per cent.	55·8
Top 20 per cent.	38·1
Top 10 per cent.	27·9
Top 5 per cent.	20·6
Top 1 per cent.	9·9
Total tax liability	64·4

[1] Excludes individuals brought into tax through the removal of the relevant reliefs.

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the total costs in 1991-92 of those tax allowances and reliefs listed in table 1.9 of "Inland Revenue Statistics 1992".

Mr. Dorrell: I regret that a reliable estimate cannot be made.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what, in the latest year for which information is available, is *(a)* the total number of people, *(b)* the number of people over state retirement age and *(c)* the number of one-parent families who pay (i) income tax and (ii) VAT.

Mr. Dorrell: It is estimated that in 1993-94 24·5 million individuals will be liable to income tax. Of these an estimated 3·0 million are aged 65 or over and 0·5 million are single parents.

VAT is chargeable on a wide range of consumer expenditure and it is likely that everybody has to pay some in the course of a year.

Premium Bonds

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total amount of all unclaimed premium bond prizes for each of the past five years.

Mr. Nelson: A premium bond prize is deemed to be unclaimed when it has been outstanding for 18 months since the draw in which it was issued. The latest figure, therefore, is for prizes unclaimed up to and including the October 1991 prize draw. All the figures below are cumulative from the first prize draw in June 1957.

	Number	*Value £*
October 1991	194,321	10,879,300
October 1990	174,954	9,859,150
October 1989	150,575	8,601,050
October 1988	127,050	7,404,200
October 1987	105,708	6,271,525

From June 1957 to October 1991, 38,549,293 prizes were issued to the value of £2,256,469,600. Prizes on the unclaimed list therefore represent 0·5 per cent. by number and 0·48 per cent. by value.

Business Enterprise Scheme

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many BES companies have been allowed to sell dormant subsidiaries without losing BES tax relief.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not available.

European Community Budget

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what contribution is made *(a)* per capita and *(b)* in total to the budget of the European Community by (i) the United Kingdom and (ii) France; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: The gross contributions to the 1993 European Community Budget by the United Kingdom and France are estimated to be as follows, taking account of the arrangements for abating the United Kingdom's contribution:

	Mecu	*Ecu per capita*
France	12,089	212
United Kingdom	7,881	137

Source: Contributions: Statement On the 1993 Community Budget (Cm 2167)
Population: OECD Main Economic Indicators

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the cost to date and the expected future cost of his Department's market-testing programme; how many staff are engaged full time in work relating to market testing; which firms of consultants have been used in connection with the market-testing programme; and how they were selected.

Mr. Nelson: Some £200,000 has been spent to date on implementing the 1993-94 programme and it is estimated that a further £100,000 will be spent. This includes the cost of support for the in-house teams and other consultancy work. It does not include the cost of the in-house teams themselves. Work on market testing is combined with other duties and no staff are engaged full time on this work. The firms of consultants so far used are Touche Ross, Prime Strategy Consultants and Ernst and Young. They have all been selected after a competitive tendering exercise.

Illegal Weapons Imports

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measures Customs and Excise officers are taking to stop the illegal flow of weapons from eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union from entering the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: Customs give high priority to the detection of illegal imports of firearms. They carry out selective anti-smuggling checks, based on intelligence-led, sharply focused profiles which take into account the ready availability of firearms originating in eastern Europe and the former USSR.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many illegal weapons were seized by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in each of the last 10 years.

Sir John Cope: The table sets out the number of illegal weapons seized by Customs and Excise during the last 10 fiscal years.

Seizures of Illegal Weapons made by HM C&E within the last 10 years.

Year Ended 31 March	*Handguns*	*Rifles*	*Shotguns*	*CS Gas Canisters*	*Stun Guns*
1984	908	155	10	152	11
1985	150	52	7	174	2
1986	108	156	11	141	30
1987	1,071	28	21	114	291
1988	168	31	6	276	309
1989	130	55	28	395	73
1990	1,489	144	44	414	301
1991	253	535	49	1,132	48
1992	176	126	82	692	53
1993	138	41	39	2,580	427

Household Incomes

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update table 25 from the Family Expenditure Survey of 1990, showing the total disposable income of households by deciles for different household composition to 1991.

Mr. Portillo: Table 25 using data from the 1991 Family Expenditure Survey is as follows:

Distribution of aggregate disposable income of households—1991
Selected groups of households

	Total disposable income of households (£)					*As a percentage of the median*			
	Lowest decile	*Lower quartile*	*Median*	*Upper quartile*	*Highest decile*	*Lowest decile*	*Lower quartile*	*Upper quartile*	*Highest decile*
Composition of household									
One adult	53·56	65·66	111·51	200·21	292·05	48·0	58·9	179·5	261·9
Retired households mainly dependent on state pensions	52·73	55·39	63·50	84·07	102·08	83·0	87·2	132·4	160·8
Other retired households	88·95	106·59	142·18	196·35	265·82	62·6	75·0	138·1	187·0
Non-retired households	47·60	88·51	176·43	261·80	349·15	27·0	50·2	148·4	197·9
One adult, one child	60·69	65·45	88·17	171·40	251·75	68·8	74·2	194·4	285·5
One adult, two or more children	72·85	84·68	124·20	201·38	338·37	58·7	68·2	162·1	272·4
One man one woman	116·71	177·94	275·13	420·20	565·42	42·4	64·7	152·7	205·5
Retired households mainly dependent on state pensions	88·51	101·11	121·06	140·58	163·78	73·1	83·5	116·1	135·3
Other retired households	143·46	174·24	219·99	298·52	437·55	65·2	79·2	135·7	198·9
Non-retired households	162·58	239·16	340·75	465·72	626·81	47·7	70·2	136·7	183·9
Two men or two women	119·31	159·61	261·61	375·56	478·65	45·6	61·0	143·6	183·0
One man one woman, one child	146·87	227·25	323·32	448·57	594·79	45·4	70·3	138·7	184·0
One man one woman, two children	174·30	252·20	338·59	453·17	601·33	51·5	74·5	133·8	177·6
One man one woman, three children	135·28	246·52	348·93	479·43	689·17	38·8	70·7	137·4	197·5

	Total disposable income of households (£)					As a percentage of the median			
	Lowest decile	Lower quartile	Median	Upper quartile	Highest decile	Lowest decile	Lower quartile	Upper quartile	Highest decile
Two adults, four or more children	149·25	213·27	272·98	364·53	557·58	54·7	78·1	133·5	204·3
Three adults	210·67	285·67	397·09	528·27	680·57	53·1	71·9	133·0	171·4
Three adults, one or more children	244·89	329·23	438·73	571·44	731·00	55·8	75·0	130·2	166·6
Four or more adults	306·97	420·55	547·95	700·92	882·96	56·0	76·8	127·9	161·1
Four of more adults, one or more children	280·48	361·29	468·14	661·14	838·12	59·9	77·2	141·2	179·0
Type of administrative area									
Greater London	67·44	143·67	283·47	475·43	689·72	23·8	50·7	167·7	243·3
Metropolitan Districts and Central Clydeside Conurbation	64·19	108·34	220·10	357·43	502·86	29·2	49·2	162·4	228·5
Non-Metropolitan Districts:									
High population density	80·00	141·45	254·77	381·67	541·41	31·4	55·55	149·8	212·5
Low population density	80·72	143·50	262·09	406·94	569·98	30·8	54·8	155·3	217·5
Households with weekly expenditure:									
Under £60	41·70	53·43	57·56	69·23	91·63	72·4	92·8	120·3	159·2
£60 and under £80	52·31	61·39	77·67	98·50	129·41	67·4	79·0	126·8	166·6
£80 and under £100	62·40	82·53	101·93	128·13	167·98	61·2	81·0	125·7	164·8
£100 and under £125	78·98	101·22	130·39	180·71	252·09	60·6	77·6	138·6	193·3
£125 and under £150	89·93	121·41	159·41	216·84	289·02	56·4	76·2	136·0	181·3
£150 and under £175	113·05	152·10	199·12	256·65	312·03	56·8	76·4	128·9	156·7
£175 and under £225	145·15	190·56	247·87	320·09	399·10	58·6	76·9	129·1	161·0
£225 and under £275	183·70	240·94	308·82	387·46	479·60	59·5	78·0	125·5	155·3
£275 and under £325	210·69	274·00	353·66	436·21	533·38	59·6	77·5	123·3	150·8
£325 and under £375	234·09	308·81	392·90	493·30	599·12	59·6	78·6	125·5	152·5
£375 and under £425	231·25	331·47	438·94	559·80	694·22	52·7	75·5	127·5	158·2
£425 and under £475	277·00	379·40	466·41	592·36	720·46	59·4	81·3	127·0	154·5
£475 and under £550	269·71	365·89	499·46	642·46	832·47	54·0	73·2	128·6	166·6
£550 and under £650	300·67	425·40	571·40	679·32	814·71	52·6	74·4	118·9	142·6
£650 and under £800	372·74	456·32	601·33	768·76	1,018·08	62·0	75·9	127·8	169·3
£800 or more	329·76	458·85	642·48	882·96	1,472·52	51·3	71·4	137·4	229·2
All household income	74·62	132·51	252·91	398·05	563·53	29·5	52·4	157·4	222·8

Financial Regulation

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he proposes to publish the Securities and Investments Board review of financial regulation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont) on 25 May 1993 at column *540*.

HEALTH

NHS Salaries

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 11 May, *Official Report*, columns *393-96*, if she will publish separate figures for salaries and wages of each of the groups listed as all other staff.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is shown in the tables. I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 11 May at columns *393-96* for details on interpretation of the tables.

Table 1

HCHS: Salaries and wages costs as a proportion of total revenue expenditure—percentage figures

	Medical staff	Dental staff	Professions allied to medicine	Professional, technical and scientific staff	Opticians	Pharmacists	Maintenance staff	Ambulance staff	Non-NHS staff (agency etc.)	Miscellaneous	Total
	Per cent.	Per cent.	Per cent.	Per cent.	Per cent.	Per cent.	Per cent.	Per cent.	Per cent.	Per cent.	Per cent.
1979-80	8·91	0·49	2·99	3·44	0·02	0·43	2·31	1·66	1·04	0·00	21·34
1980-81	9·36	0·50	2·74	3·69	0·02	0·40	2·10	1·77	0·99	0·01	21·59
1981-82	9·21	0·50	3·32	3·23	0·01	0·40	2·12	1·75	0·85	0·01	21·40
1982-83	9·26	0·49	2·93	3·76	0·02	0·40	2·14	1·96	0·73	−0·06	21·63
1983-84	9·56	0·51	3·02	3·77	0·01	0·40	2·13	1·96	0·69	0·02	22·08
1984-85	9·68	0·51	2·87	4·22	0·01	0·40	2·02	1·81	0·86	0·02	22·41
1985-86	10·12	0·53	2·98	4·30	0·02	0·41	1·94	1·79	1·10	0·02	23·21
1986-87	10·35	0·53	3·22	4·36	0·01	0·42	1·85	1·93	1·45	0·02	24·16
1987-88	10·59	0·52	3·41	4·26	0·01	0·42	1·82	1·90	1·87	0·02	24·83
1988-89	10·56	0·49	3·44	4·16	0·01	0·43	1·62	1·76	2·01	0·02	24·50
1989-90	10·59	0·46	3·47	4·17	0·02	0·47	1·52	1·51	2·19	0·02	24·42
1990-91	10·78	0·45	3·55	4·55	0·02	0·51	1·44	1·61	1·87	0·03	24·81
1991-92	9·68	0·38	3·18	4·19	0·02	0·45	1·19	1·48	1·24	0·20	22·01

Table 2
HCHS: Analysis of total salaries and wages costs—percentage figures

	Medical staff	*Dental staff*	*Professions allied to medicine*	*Professional, technical and scientific staff*	*Opticians*	*Pharmacists*	*Maintenance staff*	*Ambulance staff*	*Non-NHS staff (agency, etc.)*	*Miscellaneous*	*Total*
	Per cent.	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*
1979-80	11·98	0·65	3·99	4·59	0·03	0·57	3·08	2·22	1·38	0·00	28·50
1980-81	12·30	0·66	3·60	4·85	0·02	0·53	2·76	2·33	1·30	0·01	28·36
1981-82	12·27	0·67	4·42	4·30	0·02	0·54	2·82	2·33	1·13	0·01	28·52
1982-83	12·40	0·66	3·93	5·03	0·02	0·54	2·87	2·63	0·98	−0·08	28·96
1983-84	12·66	0·68	4·06	5·07	0·02	0·54	2·86	2·63	0·93	0·03	29·69
1984-85	13·04	0·69	3·86	5·69	0·02	0·54	2·73	2·44	1·16	0·03	30·20
1985-86	13·67	0·72	4·03	5·81	0·02	0·55	2·62	2·42	1·48	0·03	31·35
1986-87	13·89	0·71	4·33	5·86	0·02	0·56	2·49	2·59	1·95	0·03	32·43
1987-88	14·10	0·69	4·54	5·67	0·02	0·56	2·43	2·53	2·50	0·03	33·07
1988-89	13·86	0·64	4·52	5·46	0·02	0·57	2·12	2·31	2·64	0·03	32·17
1989-90	14·02	0·61	4·59	5·52	0·02	0·62	2·01	2·00	2·90	0·03	32·32
1990-91	14·14	0·59	4·66	5·97	0·02	0·67	1·89	2·11	2·45	0·04	32·55
1991-92	14·47	0·56	4·75	6·26	0·03	0·68	1·78	2·22	1·85	0·30	32·88

Note: There are some discontinuities in the detailed classification of staff between Professions Allied to Medicine (Supplementary to Medicine) and Professional, Technical and Scientific staff during the period.

Community Care

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what response she has made to the report, "Community Care Planning; a Model for Housing Need Assessment with Reference to People with Learning Disabilities", produced by the Institute of Housing and the National Federation of Housing Associations, a copy of which has been sent to her; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: We are aware of this report. The question of the provision of housing and accommodation for people with learning disabilities is an important one. Within the community care arrangements we have made it clear that social services departments, housing authorities and other housing providers should work together in planning and providing services to meet local need. The guidance issued last year to local authorities (LAC(92)15) on planning services for adults with learning disabilities also emphasised this point. Copies of the guidance are available in the Library.

Wellhouse Trust

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the financial deficit of the Wellhouse Trust in 1991-92 and 1992-93; and what deficit is projected for 1993-94.

Mr. Sackville: The current Wellhouse national health service trust was not established until 1 April 1992. The trust's 1992-93 accounts will be published in September 1993. The business plan for 1993-94 forecasts a break-even position.

Air Pollution

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent research studies have been considered by her Department on the relationship between particulate air pollution and human mortality; and what plans she has to issue guidelines for the protection of human health.

Mr. Sackville: The Department's committee on the medical effects of air pollutants (COMEAP) has considered the following recent studies relating mortality to particulate pollution:

Schwartz J and Marcus A, 1990. Mortality and air pollution in London; a time series analysis.

Schwartz J 1991. Particulate air pollution and daily mortality in Detroit.

Schwartz J and Dockery DW, 1992. Particulate air pollution and daily mortality in Steubenville, Ohio.

Waller RE and Swan AV, 1992. Invited commentary: Particulate air pollution and daily mortality.

Schwartz J and Dockery DW, 1992. Increased mortality in Philadelphia associated with daily air pollution concentrations.

Pope CA, Schwartz J and Ransom MR, 1992. Daily mortality and (PM_{10}[1]) pollution in the Utah Valley.

COMEAP advised that while these studies were consistent in demonstrating an association between PM_{10}[1] and mortality, no convincing evidence of a casual relationship had been shown.

COMEAP is currently considering ways of providing advice to sensitive groups on the steps which might be taken to reduce adverse effects of air pollutants.

[1]PM_{10} = Particulate Matter (10 micrometres).

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the outcome of her discussions on 27 May with her European Community counterparts on the issue of the advertising of tobacco products.

Dr. Mawhinney: At the Health Council meeting the Danish presidency concluded after discussions that there remained insufficient support for the Commission's revised proposal for a directive introducing a Community-wide ban on the advertising of tobacco products. There was therefore no vote on the proposal. Discussions will continue under the Belgian presidency on appropriate Community action in support of member states to reduce tobacco consumption.

NHS (Ethnic Minorities)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the membership of the working group on ethnic minority employment in the NHS; how many times it has met in 1992 and 1993; and what were its recommendations.

Dr. Mawhinney: The group is an informal one which comprises a changing number of individuals, mainly senior and professional health service staff. It has not yet completed its work.

Junior Doctors

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of junior doctors working an average of more than 83 hours a week nationally and by region at 1 April.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information on the number of junior doctors and dentists contracted for more than a maximum average of 83 hours per week at 31 March nationally and by region is shown in the table.

Region	*Number*
Northern	0
Yorkshire	18
Trent	0
East Anglian	3
North West Thames	89
North East Thames	101
South East Thames	9
South West Thames	21
Wessex	4
Oxford	31
South Western	2
West Midlands	33
Mersey	0
North Western	59
England	370

Notes:
(i) Figures derived from the reports of the 14 English regional task forces.
(ii) Special health authorities included in the figures for the Thames regions.

Regional Health Service

Mr. Booth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals she has for the future regional tier of the national health service.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-East (Mr. Congdon) on 12 May at cols *483-84*, which sets out the terms of reference of the national health service management functions and manpower review. Decisions of the regional tier of NHS management will be taken after consideration of the review's recommendations.

Infertility Treatment

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost of infertility treatment in the NHS in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: Infertility treatment costs are not separately identified in annual financial returns.

Skin Products

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 12 May, *Official Report*, column *486*, what consideration the Advisory Committee on NHS Drugs has given to drugs that have not been licensed by the Medicines Control Agency; and what mechanism will be used under the selected list scheme for the provision to NHS patients of skin products that do not require a product licence under the Medicines Act 1968.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Advisory Committee is free to consider all drugs, including those which have not been licensed by the Medicines Control Agency. It will ensure that drugs to meet all real clinical needs can be provided as economically as possible under the national health service.

Doncaster Health Care Trust

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of *(a)* the management, *(b)* the present financial position and *(c)* the care provided by the Doncaster Healthcare Trust; what representations she has received about the trust; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: National health service trusts are monitored by the NHS management executive. The board of Doncaster Healthcare NHS trust is due to publish its first annual report and accounts and hold its annual public meeting by 30 September 1993. The board anticipates that the annual accounts will demonstrate a satisfactory financial outcome in 1992-93. The specification and monitoring of the quality of care are primarily matters for purchasers.

Three hon. Members have made representations on matters relating to Doncaster Healthcare NHS trust.

West Midlands RHA

Mr. Richard Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give for the West Midlands regional health authority the names of the chairman and board members, their occupations or professions and their level of allowances or remuneration payable.

Dr. Mawhinney: The names and occupations of the chairman and non-executive members of West Midlands regional health authority are as follows:

		Occupation/Profession:
Chairman:	Sir Donald Wilson	Farmer
Non-Executive Members:	Ms Jacqueline Cravos	Chartered Accountant
	Mrs. Elspeth Metcalfe	Businesswoman
	Mr. Timothy Morris	Chairman, Birmingham Post
	Professor Sir Michael Thompson	Vice-Chancellor, University of Birmingham
	Mr. Michael Worley	Managing Director

Executive members are appointed by the regional health authority, which determines their remuneration.

The current levels of annual remuneration for chairmen and non-executive members of regional health authorities are:

	£
Chairmen:	20,925
Non-executive members:	5,000

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she has considered revised arrangements for the provision of legal services to the West Midlands health authority and West Midlands district health authorities; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The provision of legal services to West Midlands regional health authority and its associated districts is a matter for the authorities concerned.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give for each of the hospital trusts in the west midlands region the names of the chairman and board members, their occupations or professions and any allowances or remuneration payable.

Dr. Mawhinney: The names of chairmen and non-executive directors of national health service trusts in West Midlands region and the most up-to-date information about their occupations are as shown:

		Occupation/Profession
First Community Health NHS Trust		
Chairman:	Richard Cartwright	Managing Director
Non-executive directors:	Mr. D. J. Sandy	Chartered Surveyor
	Miss S. C. Massey	Solicitor
	Mr. M. R. Heenan	Chartered Accountant
	Mr. K. A. Jackson	Director
Rugby District NHS Trust		
Chairman:	Leslie Anderton	Retired Personnel Executive
Non-executive directors:	Mrs. V. Rizk	Housewife
	Mr. A. M. Laws	Engineer
	Mr. I. Fell	Director, British Blind Sports
	Mr. P. Morgan	Solicitor
	Mr. P. Galliford	Construction Engineer
Mid Staffs Mental Health Unit NHS Trust		
Chairman:	Richard Venables	Businessman
Non-executive directors:	Mrs. J. M. Dalgarno	Councillor
	Dr. J. Fleming Patterson	Retired GP
	Mr. R. Trainor	Management Consultant
	Lord Stafford	Runs Family Estate
	Mr. C. R. Craven	Banker
Walsall Hospitals NHS Trust		
Chairman:	Mavis Foden	Councillor
Non-executive directors:	Mrs. M. Bladon	Freelance Market Research Supervisor
	Mr. C. N. McFarlane	Retired Consultant Obstetrician
	Mr. R. A. Anderson	Management Consultant
	Mr. D. S. Frost	Chief Executive
	Mr. T. G. Kelly	Ophthalmic Optician
South Warwickshire Healthcare NHS Trust		
Chairman:	Lady Jean Liggins	—
Non-executive directors:	Mr. B. Gillitt	Chartered Accountant
	Mrs. A. D. Docker	Company Director
	Mr. P. Clarke	Chartered Surveyor
	Mr. D. Tuckey	Retired Management Consultant
	Mrs. J. Marsh	School Governor
East Birmingham Hospital NHS Trust		
Chairman:	John Bettinson	Solicitor
Non-executive directors:	Mr. P. Couse	Chartered Accountant
	Mrs. C. Kenrick	Market Research Consultant
	Lady S. Thompson	Former Scientist
	Mr. M. Wilcox	Property Consultant
Herefordshire Community Health NHS Trust		
Chairman:	Sir John Cotterell	Farmer
Non-executive directors:	Mr. A. P. Priday	Chartered Accountant
	Mrs. H. Philpott	Local Government Worker
	Mr. R. Smith	Managing Director
	Mr. R. Higgins	Former Diplomat/Journalist
	Mrs. M. Praill	Age Concern Development Worker
Premier Health NHS Trust		
Chairman:	Margaret Whalley	Councillor
Non-executive directors:	Dr. P. Bradfield	Managing Director
	Mr. P. Atkinson	Executive Director
	Mr. K. Hope	Chartered Accountant
	Professor M. Olsen	Emeritus Professor, Birmingham University
	Mrs. I. Davies	Head Teacher
Mid Staffordshire General Hospitals NHS Trust		
Chairman:	Joan Burton	Farming Business

		Occupation/Profession
Non-executive directors:	Mr. H. Butter	Retired Farmer
	Mrs. C. Evans	Accountant
	Mr. C. Shore	Company Director
	Mr. J. Woodyard	Retired Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon
	Mrs. P. Atkins	Publicity Consultant

NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE HOSPITAL CENTRE NHS TRUST

Chairman:	Geoffrey Manning	Retired Consultant Oral Surgeon
Non-executive directors:	Mr. D. P. Johnstone	Chartered Accountant
	Mrs. M. Michell	PR Consultant
	Mrs. R. Taylor	Housewife
	Mr. E. F. Slade	Director, Keele University
	Mr. S. Russell	Retired

WALSALL COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES NHS TRUST

Chairman:	Lady Alma Hill	Communications Consultant
Non-executive directors:	Mr. F. C. Bell	Retired Manager
	Mr. D. Chevins	Management Consultant
	Mrs. T. Joshi	JP
	Mr. A. J. Wooster	Retired Company Executive
	Mrs. E. M. Buggins	Freelance Lecturer

NORTH WARWICKSHIRE HEALTHCARE NHS TRUST

Chairman:	Keith Dixon	Managing Director
Non-executive directors:	Mrs. C. Banning	Educational Psychologist
	Mrs. E. M. Stuart	General Secretary
	Mr. R. P. Hartley	Managing Director
	Mr. U. Todnor	Chief Executive
	Mr. A. F. Pavis	Design Engineer

NORTH EAST WORCESTERSHIRE COMMUNITY HEALTH NHS TRUST

Chairman:	Ian McKay	Chief Executive
Non-executive directors:	Reverand P. Chippendale	Clergyman
	Mrs. J. Croom	Chartered Accountant
	Mrs. J. Morris	Partner, Hotel Business
	Mr. B. Slater	Managing Director
	Mrs. J. Stacey	Retired Head Teacher

SOUTH WORCESTERSHIRE COMMUNITY NHS TRUST

Chairman:	Cecil Duckworth	Chief Executive
Non-executive directors:	Mr. C. Glossop	Chief Executive
	Mrs. S. Richards	Management Consultant
	Mr. D. Phillips	College Manager
	Dr. M. Windsor	Retired Clinical Director
	Mr. G. Hughes	Retired Banker

KIDDERMINSTER HEALTHCARE NHS TRUST

Chairman:	Sir Patrick Lawrence	Solicitor
Non-executive directors:	Mr. D. Mills	Company Director
	Mrs. N. Griffiths	Housewife
	Professor P. Spurgeon	Director, Health Services Management Centre
	Mr. A. Clarke	Local Government Officer
	Mrs. C. Dutton	Chartered Accountant

WOLVERLY NHS TRUST

Chairman:	Anne Hingley	Company Director
Non-executive directors:	Mr. J. S. Quinn	Solicitor
	Mrs. C. Bruton	Company Director
	Mrs. J. MacDougall	PR Consultant
	Mr. D. Rogers	Director
	Mr. D. S. Houle	Chartered Surveyor

GOOD HOPE HOSPITALS NHS TRUST

Chairman:	Doug Ellis	Company Chairman
Non-executive directors:	Mr. M. J. Ansell	Chartered Accountant
	Mrs. R. Collings	Housewife
	Mr. J. Slater	Estate Agency Consultant
	Mr. D. M. Owen	Solicitor
	Mrs. V. Rao	Retired Head Teacher

SHROPSHIRE MENTAL HEALTH NHS TRUST

Chairman:	John Winter	Director

		Occupation/Profession
Non-executive directors:	Mr. A. James	Chartered Accountant
	Mrs. K. Davies	Adult Educationalist
	Mrs. J. M. Young	Housewife
	Ms L. S. Owens	Local Government Officer
	Mr. P. T. Roberts	PR Consultant
WALSGRAVE HOSPITALS NHS TRUST		
Chairman:	Robert Jordan	Ex-Managing Director
Non-executive directors:	Mr. D. Evans	Chartered Accountant
	Mr. H. Corker	Retired Banker
	Mrs. P. A. Deeley	Barrister
	Mrs. R. Stewart	Housewife
	Mr. F. Bunting	Chartered Accountant
PRINCESS ROYAL NHS TRUST		
Chairman:	Jeremy Beasley	Company Director
Non-executive directors:	Miss H. Hluchoweckyj	Building Society District Manager
	Mr. G. W. Bullock	Personnel Manager
	Mr. M. J. Bolderston	Director
	Miss M. J. Pursglove	Company Director
SOUTH WARWICKSHIRE GENERAL NHS TRUST		
Chairman:	Jennifer Gove	Businesswoman
Non-executive directors:	Mr. B. Willis	Chief Executive
	Mrs. J. L. Mitchell	Businesswoman
	Mr. C. Goody	Industry Strategy Manager
	Sir William Lawrence	General Manager
	Dr. L. M. Ashburner	Senior Research Fellow
BURTON HOSPITALS NHS TRUST		
Chairman:	David Elliot	Company Director
Non-executive directors:	Mrs. G. Baron	Housewife
	Mr. R. Heelis	Solicitor
	Mrs. F. Lang	Magistrate
	Mr. J. S. Dain	Chartered Accountant
	Mrs. J. D. Paskett	Journalist
STAFFORDSHIRE AMBULANCE SERVICE NHS TRUST		
Chairman:	Charles Boote	Managing Director
Non-executive directors:	Mrs. J. Jessel	Freelance Management Consultant
	Mrs. F. Beatty	Former Public Relations Officer
	Mr. W. Gourlay	Distribution Director
	Mr. J. Lloyd-Davies	Retired Businessman
	Professor K. Lee	Director, Keele University
WEST MIDLANDS AMBULANCE SERVICE NHS TRUST		
Chairman:	Mr. H. Musgrove	Company Chairman
Non-executive directors:	Mr. R. Clifford	Agent, Bank of England
	Mrs. J. Moyle	Managing Director
	Mr. O. Parmer	Businessman
	Professor J. Robinson	Retired Consultant Anaesthetist
	Mr. P. Leopold	Ex-Assistant Chief Constable

National health service trust chairmen are remunerated according to the unit turnover in 1988-89. The present annual rates are:

Unit turnover 1988-89	*Band*	*Rates per annum £*
In excess of £50 million	Band 1	19,285
Between £20 million and £50 million	Band 2	17,145
Less than £20 million	Band 3	15,125

Non-executive directors of national health service trusts are remunerated at the rate of £5,000 per annum.

Crisis Intervention Accommodation

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) of 15 April, *Official Report*, column *672*, how her Department defines crisis intervention accommodation.

Mr. Bowis: There is no standard definition. It is for health and local authorities to provide appropriate accommodation for local crisis intervention services. This can include mental health centres, hostels and ordinary housing.

Health Trusts

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the rate of return on capital required from health trusts; how capital is defined; and how it is assessed.

Mr. Sackville: Trusts are required to make a real pre-interest return of 6 per cent. of relevant net assets. The definition of relevant net assets (capital) and the calculation of the return are detailed in chapter 17 of the Trust Manual for Accounts, a copy of which will be placed in the Library.

Selected List Drugs

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received about the inclusion of contraceptives on the selected list scheme.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden) on 26 May at column *578*.

Contraceptives

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the effect of restriction of choice of contraception on unplanned pregnancies.

Dr. Mawhinny: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall) on 18 January at col. *97*.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of *(a)* women and *(b)* men receiving free contraception in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: The information is not available in the form requested. However, table 1 shows the number of first contracts in community and hospital family planning clinics, excluding those for whom a main method of contraception was not provided, and table 2, the number of patients for whom general medical practitioners claimed payment for provision of contraceptive services. As information is collected at differing dates, the tables relate to the last five-year period for which comprehensive information is available.

Table 1: Number of first contacts at community and hospital family planning clinics (thousands)

	Total	*Female*	*Male*
1986[1]	1,320	1,295	25
1987-88[1]	1,227	1,196	31
1988-89[1]	1,016	986	30
1989-90	994	964	31
1990-91	961	931	30

[1] For 1986, 1987-88 and 1988-89 detailed information by sex is not available and has been estimated.

Table 2:
Number of patients (at 1 October each year) for whom payment was due to general medical practitioners for the provision of contraceptive services in the year ended 1 October (thousands).

	Number of Claims[1]
1986	2,570
1987	2,570
1988	2,660
1989	2,730
1990	2,860

[1] Figures relate to women only. The number of instances in these figures where advice alone was provided is not known.

Relocation and Amalgamation

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the sections and organisations within her Department for which there are plans for relocation or amalgamation.

Mr. Sackville: The Department has no further plans for relocation having completed the move of the national health service management executive to Leeds. There are no plans at present to amalgamate any parts of the Department.

Health Authority Staff

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what level of reduction in regional health authority staffing levels is being proposed; and on what criteria this level was proposed.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have told regional health authorities that they should reduce staffing levels to typically a maximum of 200. This reflects the changing role of RHAs as the national health service reforms are implemented. The NHS management functions and manpower review will make recommendations on the longer term future of RHAs. I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-East (Mr. Congdon) on 12 May at columns *483-84* for terms of reference of this review.

Pharmacists

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many pharmacies in the City of Durham constituency area issue *(a)* fewer than 2,000 prescriptions per month and *(b)* more than 2,000 prescriptions per month.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available in the form requested. However, in 1991-92 in Durham family health services authority, which includes the City of Durham constituency, 19 pharmacies were dispensing less than 2,000 prescriptions and 93 were dispensing more than 2,000 prescriptions per month on average throughout the year.

Munchhausen's Syndrome by Proxy

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on the incidence of Munchhausen's Syndrome by proxy; how cases have been recorded; and how many subsequently disputed diagnoses have been made.

Mr. Bowis: Specific diagnostic information on this syndrome is not available centrally. It is known to be very rare.

North Western Regional Health Authority

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on trends in patient demand in the North Western regional health authority.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for North Western regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact Sir Bruce Martin, chairman of the regional health authority, for details.

Joint Replacements

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines she has issued in relation to a British standard for knee and hip joint replacement sets.

Mr. Sackville: There is no single British standard for knee and hip joint replacement implants. National standards are defined through an interrelated system of around 40 British standards for orthopaedic implants and materials. Compliance with appropriate standards is called for in the Department of Health's requirements for quality systems for orthopaedic implants, published in 1990, copies of which are available in the Library.

Teenage Pregnancies

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what targets have been set for the reduction of unwanted teenage pregnancies.

Mr. Sackville: The Government White Paper, "The Health of the Nation", includes the target to reduce the rate of conceptions among the under-16s by at least 50 per cent. by the year 2000. Measures which reduce pregnancies in the under-16s may also be expected to exert a similar effect on unwanted pregnancies in the over-16s.

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the rate of *(a)* births and *(b)* abortions per thousand women aged (i) 15, (ii) 16, (iii) 17, (iv) 18 and (v) 19 years in each year since 1980.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table:

Births and abortions per 1,000 women aged 15-19 years; England and Wales[1]

	Births[1,2] *Age (years)*					*Abortions Age (years)*				
Year	*15*	*16*	*17*	*18*	*19*	*15*	*16*	*17*	*18*	*19*
1980	2·6	10·7	27·6	47·5	66·6	6·8	15·8	20·5	22·5	22·8
1981	2·4	10·2	24·4	42·7	61·7	6·7	15·1	19·6	22·1	22·4
1982	2·4	10·0	24·5	40·9	58·6	7·4	15·8	19·0	21·0	21·5
1983	2·8	10·3	24·2	39·3	55·6	8·0	16·5	19·2	20·7	20·3
1984	2·9	10·8	25·5	40·4	55·7	8·3	17·8	21·3	22·5	22·1
1985	3·2	11·7	27·5	43·5	58·4	8·1	17·5	22·0	24·1	23·7
1986	3·1	11·8	28·1	45·6	59·7	7·9	16·8	21·7	24·9	24·5
1987	3·2	11·8	28·5	46·0	62·0	8·2	16·7	22·3	26·1	27·5
1988	3·2	12·9	29·9	47·7	63·3	8·2	18·6	24·5	28·6	30·2
1989	3·6	12·9	29·4	45·4	61·2	8·4	18·1	24·3	28·2	29·7
1990	3·7	13·6	31·4	47·1	61·8	8·6	18·0	24·6	29·5	30·2
1991	4·1	13·9	30·7	47·0	61·9	7·9	16·4	22·7	26·7	29·0
1992	4·0	13·2	29·6	45·4	59·3	Not yet available				

[1] The populations used as the denominators for 1991 rates are the provisional estimates based on the 1991 Census. The denominators for the 1992 rates are projected populations.
[2] Live births and still births combined.

Health Authority Chairmen

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage increases in salaries have been awarded to chairmen of regional health authorities, district health authorities and family health service authorities in respect of financial years *(a)* 1990-91, *(b)* 1991-92 and *(c)* 1992-93 in each region.

Dr. Mawhinney: Percentage increases awarded to chairmen of regional health authorities, district health authorities and family health services authorities since April 1990 are shown in the table. The same rates of increase applied in each region.

Chairmen's remuneration: Percentage increases

Chairmen	*1 April 1990*	*1 January 1991*	*1 April 1991*	*1 December 1991*
RHA	51·8	1·0	7·5	1·8
DHA				
Band 1	9·7	1·0	7·5	1·8
Band 2	24·4	1·0	7·5	1·8
Band 3	41·3	1·0	7·5	1·8
FHSA				
Band 1	127·9	1·0	7·5	1·8
Band 2	112·0	1·0	7·5	1·8
Band 3	96·1	1·0	7·5	1·8

Notes: 1. The increases effective from 1 April 1990 resulted from a restructuring of chairmen's remuneration to reflect more accurately the level of responsibility and time commitment involved.
2. Three separate bands for DHA and family practitioner committee (later FHSA) chairmen's remuneration were introduced with effect from 1 April 1990.
3. The increase effective from 1 December 1991 was the second stage of the award for 1991-92 and represented 2 per cent. of the 1 January 1991 rate.
4. Increases are rounded to the nearest decimal place.

Mental Health Act

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people have been detained under section 2 of the Mental Health Act 1983 in each of the last five years.

Mr. Bowis: Formal admissions to national health service hospitals, private nursing homes and special hospitals under section 2 of the Mental Health Act 1983 in each of the five years for which data are available are shown in the table.

Year	*Section 2 of the Mental Health Act 1983, England*
1985	7,902
1986	8,387
1987-88	8,867
1988-89	9,517
1989-90	9,534

The numbers are of admissions, not persons, as a person could be admitted more than once during the year. Data for 1987-88 onwards are on a financial year basis.

Liquid Paraffin Oil

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health to what extent liquid paraffin oil is now used as a laxative; what information her Department has concerning any adverse effects on human health arising from the regular use of this medicine; whether any advice has been given to pharmacists concerning dosage and duration of use; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Preparations containing liquid paraffin for use as laxatives are only indicated for the symptomatic relief of constipation. Prolonged regular use may be associated with inflammatory lesions in the gastrointestinal tract, lipoid pneumonia due to inadvertent inhalation and interference with absorption of fat-soluble vitamins. The Committee on Safety of Medicines issued advice regarding the use of liquid paraffin in its bulletin Current Problems Number 28, sent to all doctors and pharmacists in May 1990, a copy of which is available in the Library. The CSM advice is also included in the British National Formulary, which the Department issues free of charge to all prescribers twice yearly.

Preparations containing liquid paraffin for use as laxatives are not available directly to the public and may only be bought from pharmacies under the supervision of a pharmacist, where the pack size which may be sold is limited to 160 ml, approximately one week's supply. Prolonged use is not advised and these preparations are contra-indicated for children under three years of age. Package labels clearly state that

"repeated use is not recommended"

and

"to consult your doctor if laxatives are needed every day, if you have persistent abdominal pain or a condition which makes swallowing difficult".

Lewisham Hospital Trust

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what undertakings Sir Philip Harris has given as to the proportion of his time to be devoted to the chairmanship of the Lewisham Hospital Trust relative to business and other activities; and if she will now review his appointment.

Dr. Mawhinney: All national health service trust chairmen are expected to devote at least the equivalent of three working days per week to their duties. I have no reason to believe that Sir Philip Harris will not be in a position to make this commitment and I have no plans to review his appointment.

Population Statistics

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the latest estimates by the Registrar General of Populations of those aged 17 years and over, plus 63 per cent. of those aged 16 years, for each district council area and parliamentary constituency in England and Wales, together in each case with the equivalent year's electoral registration figures, also expressed as a percentage of these population estimates.

Mr. Sackville: The Office of Population Census and Surveys expect to publish a set of final mid-1991 population estimates, taking account of the later 1991 census results, towards the end of this month. Updated estimates relating to mid-1992 will be published in October. I will arrange for comparisons between 1992 electorates and final mid-1991 estimates, and later between 1993 electorates and mid-1992 estimates, for local authority areas in England and Wales to be placed in the Library as soon as possible. No population estimates are currently available for parliamentary constituencies. However, census data for parliamentary constituencies, which will include population counts, will be available later this year.

Special Therapy Facilities

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what additional resources she plans to provide to health authorities to meet their statutory responsibilities to provide special facilities for *(a)* speech therapy, *(b)* physiotherapy and *(c)* occupational therapy; and what representations she has received on the level of funding currently provided.

Dr. Mawhinney: Health authorities and general practitioner fund holders are responsible for purchasing speech therapy, physiotherapy and occupational therapy services to meet the needs of their residents in the light of their judgment of priorities and within the resources available to them.

NHS Funding

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research is being undertaken or commissioned by the Government into the possibility of funding the NHS in part or wholly by a new system of health insurance or tokens.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research is being undertaken or commissioned by the Government into the possibility of hospital or primary care charges related to the ability to pay.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Unregistered Doctors

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether a doctor with medical qualifications from another country may practise as a medical practitioner in this country without registering with the General Medical Council.

Dr. Mawhinney: All doctors wishing to work as medical practitioners in the United Kingdom must be registered with the General Medical Council. An overseas qualified doctor must obtain the necessary registration from the General Medical Council in order to engage in any professional employment as a medical practitioner in the United Kingdom.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether United Kingdom pharmacists may dispense prescription-only medicines prescribed by doctors not registered with the General Medical Council.

Dr. Mawhinney: No.

Residential Care Homes

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list the funding assessment that has been made by each of the London borough councils to support a person living in residential care under the care in the community legislation;

(2) what advice she has given to people or organisations running residential care homes in areas where the present agreed rates of support are below existing income support benefits; and if she will make a statement;

(3) what account local authorities are required to take of religious requirements when assessing what funding will be paid for a resident living in a residential home under the existing care in the community legislation; and if she will make a statement;

(4) what right of appeal exists for people running residential care homes if they disagree with the funding assessment made by the local authority for a resident living within the home; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: Contracts for residential care or nursing home services are negotiated and agreed between local authorities and home owners. Local authorities are not required to submit details of the agreements reached.

Care in the Community

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement as to the procedures to be followed in respect of an at-risk person resident within a borough that has already spent its care in the community budget before a full assessment has been made of the person's health to ensure the protection of the welfare of that person.

Mr. Bowis: The assessment of health needs and the provision of health services remain the responsibilities of health authorities. All local authorities are receiving special transitional grants which will enable them to meet their new community care responsibilities; the grants represent only a proportion of any authority's personal social services resources. It is for local authorities to set priorities and manage their resources sensibly.

Water Disconnections (Public Health)

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what discussions she has had with the Chief Medical Officer about the potential threat to public health caused by the disconnection of water to domestic dwellings;

(2) what action she has taken through the Chief Medical Officer to examine the implications of the number of notifiable cases of dysentery and hepatitis A in the last three months.

Mr. Sackville: We regularly discuss with the Chief Medical Officer any possible threats to public health. Provisional figures indicate that in the first three months of this year reported cases of Shigella sonnei—the principal causative organism of dysentery in the United Kingdom—and hepatitis A show a fall over the same period last year.

Nurses and Midwives

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* nurses and *(b)* midwives were in training in each health region in each year since 1979.

Mr. Sackville: The information will be placed in the Library.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* district nurses and *(b)* community midwives were employed in the NHS in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave her on 11 February at cols. *751-52*, for information on national health service district nurses. Information on community midwives is shown in the table.

National health service community midwifery staff England September 1987 to September 1991 (whole-time equivalents)

	Number
1987	4,100
1988	4,110
1989	4,070
1990	4,200
1991	4,560

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many qualified nursing staff are employed by *(a)* voluntary organisations and *(b)* local authorities.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Grants

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of grants which have been approved by her Department under the section 64 general scheme of grants in the financial year starting on 1 April distinguishing between *(a)* existing core grants, *(b)* new core grants and *(c)* new project grants and the total funds allocated under each category.

Mr. Sackville: By 28 May 1993 grant approval letters under the section 64 general scheme had been issued for 200 existing core grants, 29 new core grants and 52 new project grants. The total sums involved are £10,569,000, £602,000 and £1,220,000 respectively. A further 88 approval letters had also been issued for funds totalling £2,791,000 in respect of existing project and capital grants. Final details of grants totalling approximately £4 million are currently being settled. The total provision for 1993-94 is £19,207,000.

Hospital Fire Officers

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospitals do not have a fire officer currently in post; and if she will list them.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally. Guidance to health service employers on the appointment of officers responsible for fire safety is set out in the Department's document "FIRECODE—Policy and Principles". A copy of the relevant extract from this document will be placed in the Library.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary fo State for Health what assessment she has made of whether competitive tendering by district health authorities is effectively supervised by regional health authorities; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: None. Following the successful reforms of the national health service all purchasers and providers are charged to ensure that they receive good quality and value for money on behalf of their patients.

Waiting Times, Trent Region

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the waiting time for patients for operations in the Trent regional health authority in each of the past three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Waiting time information by regional health authority is given in "Hospital Waiting List Statistics: England", published twice a year, copies of which are available in the Library. Provisional figures for March 1993 show that, over the last three years, Trent regional health authority has reduced the number of patients waiting over a year by 31 per cent.

Cervical Cancer Screening

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provision there is within the South East Thames regional health authority area for cervical cancer screening; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Provision for cervical cancer screening is the responsibility of the appropriate regional health authority. My hon. Friend may wish to contact Dr. Gabriel Scally, director of public health of South East Thames health authority for details.

HIV/AIDS and Drug Abuse

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will set out the criteria used in allocating resources to health authorities for their work in connection with *(a)* HIV/AIDS and *(b)* drug abuse, including the criteria in respect of (i) education and (ii) prevention in these areas; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Allocations to regional health authorities for the development of services for the treatment and care of people with HIV and AIDS are made on the basis of each region's HIV and AIDS prevalence and the costs of treatment. Allocations to regions for developing local HIV prevention work with their resident populations are made according to weighted capitation principles.

Funding for drugs services, including for work to prevent the spread of HIV among drug users and to their sexual partners, is based on the number of the population in each region aged between 15 and 34. Allocations have also been made as a contribution to the cost of methadone prescribing as part of a planned programme of treatment, and on the basis of regions' reported usage.

St. Bartholomew's Hospital

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list under the relevant specialty heading the names of the members of each of the six specialty review teams which examined specialty work at St. Bartholomew's hospital.

Dr. Mawhinney: The names of members of each of the six specialty review teams are as follows:

Cardiac

Professor Geoffrey Smith, Northern General Hospital, Sheffield *(Chairman)*
Mr. John James, Kensington Chelsea and Westminster Commissioning Agency
Professor Keith Fox, Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh
Dr. Andrew MacLeod, Poole Hospital NHS Trust
Mr. John Bailey, Glenfield Unit, Leicester
Dr. Ewen Bramwell, GP, Dorking
Dr. Don Bethune, Papworth Hospital, Cambridge
Ms Ann Townsend, Freeman Hospital, Newcastle
Professor Martin Buxton, Brunel University
Sir Richard Lloyd, British Heart Foundation

Neurosciences

Mr. Thomas Hide, Southern General Hospital, Glasgow *(Chairman)*
Ms Victoria Hardman, Bloomsbury and Islington Health Authority
Professor Alastair Compston, Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge
Dr. Cicely Partridge, Kings College, London
Ms Kate Newlands, Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford
Ms Mary Baker, Parkinson's Disease Society
Dr. Colin Smith GP, Rochester

Plastics and Burns

Mr. Philip Sykes, St. Lawrence's Hospital, Chepstow *(Chairman)*
Ms Mary Whitty, Brent and Harrow Health Authority
Mr. John H. James, Shotley Bridge Hospital, Durham
Mr. Douglas Murray, Wardsley Hospital, Stourbridge
Dr. Tom Davies GP, Peterborough
Sir Geoffrey Slaney, lately University of Birmingham
Mrs. Anne Driver, Leicester Royal Infirmary

Renal

Professor Netar Mallick, Manchester Royal Infirmary *(Chairman)*
Mr. Peter Coe, Tower Hamlets Health Authority
Dr. Mary McGeown, Queen's University, Belfast
Dr. Andrew Williams, Swansea Hospital
Professor Denis Pereira Gray, Exeter University
Mr. James Wellbeloved, lately National Kidney Research Fund
Dr. John Evans, United Kingdom Transplant Support Services Authority
Mrs. Linda Whitworth, Manchester Royal Infirmary
Professor David Kerr, Royal Postgraduate Medical School
Professor J. R. Salaman, Royal Infirmary, Cardiff
Dr. Geoffrey Maidment, King Edwards VII Hospital, Windsor
Mr. Jonathan Stopes-Roe, City and East London Health Authority

Cancer

Mr. Christopher Paine, Royal College of Radiologists *(Chairman)*
Mr. Michael Bellamy, Ealing Hammersmith and Hounslow Commissioning Agency
Professor Stanley Kaye, University of Glasgow
Professor Robert Mansell, University Hospital of Wales
Dr. Hugh Sanderson, National Case Mix, Wessex RHA
Mrs. Gill Oliver, Clatterbridge Hospital, The Wirral
Dr. Elizabeth Murray GP, London
Professor Mark Baker, Yorkshire RHA
Ms Loretta Tinckham, Cancer Relief MacMillan Fund
Dr. Graham Thorpe, Countess Mountbatten Hospital, Southampton

Children's Specialist Services

Professor Sir David Hull, University Hospital Nottingham *(Chairman)*
Mr. Martin Roberts, Wandsworth Health Authority
Dr. Roderick MacFaul, Pinderfields Hospital, Wakefield
Mrs. A. M. Craft, Freeman Hospital, Newcastle
Lady Jean Lovell Davies, Caring for Sick Children in the Health Services
Dr. Robert Cooper, Solihull Health Authority
Dr. John Oldham GP, Glossop, Derbyshire

Professor David Lloyd, Institute of Child Health, Liverpool
Ms Zarrina Kurtz, South West Thames Regional Health Authority
Dr. Peter Morris, Association of Paediatric Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland

Military Hospital Beds

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she intends taking to ensure that the loss of military hospital beds does not add to civilian waiting list times.

Mr. Sackville: It is the responsibility of district health authorities, as purchasers of health care, to ensure, in consultation with their providers, that the patients charter waiting time guarantees and local waiting times standards are met.

Head Injuries

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people have died from head injuries in England in each year since 1979.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Numbers of deaths where the underlying cause was recorded as being from a head injury ([1]ICDs 800-804 and 850-854) in England 1979-1992

Year	Males	Females	Total
1979	2,807	1,275	4,082
1980	2,701	1,299	4,000
1981	2,481	1,108	3,589
1982	2,569	1,167	3,736
1983	2,613	1,219	3,832
1984	2,644	1,185	3,829
1985	2,536	1,170	3,706
1986	2,543	1,159	3,702
1987	2,601	1,175	3,776
1988	2,505	1,095	3,600
1989	2,590	1,094	3,684
1990	2,753	1,092	3,845
1991	2,418	1,050	3,468
1992	2,208	1,002	3,210

[1] International Classification of Diseases, 9th Revision.

Live Births

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many live births there were in each hospital in Lancashire in each year since 1988-89.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table:

Livebirths in Lancashire Hospitals 1989-1992

	1989	1990	1991	1992
Sharoe Green Hospital, Preston	4,549	4,957	4,719	4,423
Royal Preston Hospital	1	3	—	—
Queens Park Hospital, Blackburn	3,494	3,669	3,682	3,628
Victoria Hospital, Blackpool	3,535	3,564	3,583	3,351
Burnley General Hospital	2,971	3,010	3,004	2,834
Royal Lancaster Infirmary	1,908	1,921	1,998	1,848
Lancaster Moor Hospital	1	—	—	—
Ormskirk and District General Hospital	1,323	1,437	1,307	1,202
Chorley and District Hospital	236	243	192	188
Victoria Hospital, Accrington	192	187	205	140
Bramley Meade Maternity Hospital, Whalley	134	70	—	—

Extra-contractual Referrals

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance or advice has been issued by her Department on payments from the extra-contractual referrals budgets of health authorities for treatment for patients who in the past have paid for similar treatments themselves in the private sector.

Mr. Sackville: Requests for extra-contractual referrals (ECRs) for this group of patients should be considered in the same way as any other ECR request. Guidance on handling ECRs was issued under cover of EL(92)60 on 9 September 1992, copies of which are available in the Library.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people in each district health authority, who have in the past paid for treatment in the private sector, have been refused money from extra-contractual referrals budgets for similar treatments.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Liver Transplants

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children under one year of age have been diagnosed as suffering from biliary atresia in each year from 1987; how many of them were placed on a waiting list for liver transplant in each of those years; and in how many of those cases in each year a liver transplant operation was performed.

Mr. Sackville: The information is not available centrally in the form requested. Published reports suggest that the incidence of extra hepatic biliary atresia is about one in 14,000 infants. From this it is estimated that in England and Wales where about 700,000 infants are born each year, of whom 93 per cent. survive the first year there would be about 50 cases annually. The table shows the number of children in the United Kingdom aged less than one year who joined the liver transplant waiting list in each year from 1987, and the number transplanted. It has not been possible to identify the specific conditions from which these children were suffering.

Year	Number of children aged less than one year joining the liver waiting list for the first time (or for the first time since previous transplant)	Number of these children transplanted
1987	25	7
1988	17	8
1989	14	12
1990	13	9
1991	22	21
1992	28	22
1993	12	7[1]

[1] Up to 28 May 1993. Four children under age one who joined the waiting list for livers in 1993 are still awaiting transplant as at 28 May 1993. Nine children appear in the table more than once due to retransplants while aged less than one year. Figures supplied by the United Kingdom Transplant Support Service Authority.

Abortion

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many abortions have been performed by the NHS in each year since 1979.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table; 1991 is the last complete year for which information is available, 1992 data (January-March) are provisional.

Number of abortions performed in NHS facilities and in non-NHS facilities under agency agreement England and Wales 1979-1992

Year	Number of NHS abortions	Number of "Agency" abortions
1979	55,767	Data not available before 1981
1980	60,818	
1981	61,276	2,343
1982	62,532	4,425
1983	62,817	4,620
1984	64,926	4,916
1985	65,254	5,938
1986	67,529	6,839
1987	69,505	8,804
1988	69,177	9,380
1989	70,786	9,207
1990	73,582	9,720
1991	75,245	9,208
1992[1]	19,301	2,881

[1] Provisional January-March 1992.

Blood Donors

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her reply of 21 May, *Official Report*, columns *333-34*, if she is giving consideration to adding persons who are at risk of exposure to radiation to the categories of persons asked not to donate blood for the National Blood Transfusion Service; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The National Blood Transfusion Service does not consider that such persons, in general, should be excluded from donating blood. The decision whether or not to accept such a person as a donor depends on the individual's own medical history.

Embryology

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many research projects using human embryos have been licensed by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority since its inception.

Mr. Sackville: Thirty-five.

Skin Cancer

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people have died from skin cancer in each year since 1979.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Number of people who have died from skin cancer in England and Wales 1979-92

ICD	172 (Malignant melanoma of skin)	173 (Other malignant neoplasm of skin)
1979	801	383
1980	813	366
1981	864	381
1982	944	378
1983	853	408
1984	993	439
1985	987	462
1986	1,040	412
1987	1,030	441
1988	1,078	430
1989	1,099	447
1990	1,170	436
1991	1,169	465
1992	1,142	486

Bone Cancer

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people were diagnosed as suffering from bone cancer in England in each of the last 10 years; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The number of cases of bone cancer (International Classification of Diseases, ninth revision, code 170) registered in England in each of the years 1979 to 1987, the last year for which information is available, is shown in the table.

Registrations of bone cancer, 1979-87 England ICD 170, 9th revision

Year	Males	Females
1979	232	179
1980	214	159
1981	244	205
1982	217	178
1983	230	171
1984	226	183
1985	190	194
1986	189	189
1987	218	184

Number of cases for earlier years (1971 to 1978) are available, and can be found in the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys publication 'Cancer statistics: registrations' series MB1 nos. 1-10; comparisons with figures for 1979 onwards, however, will be affected by the change from the 8th revision of the ICD to the 9th revision.

NHS Trusts

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance and regulations limit the proportion of private practice in NHS trusts.

Mr. Sackville: Under section 5(9) and paragraph 14 of schedule 2 of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990, NHS trusts may make accommodation and services available for patients who give undertakings to pay such charges as the trust determines. In so doing, there must be no significant interference with the performance by the trust of its obligations under NHS contracts or imposed by order.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which NHS trust hospitals in London have not signed contracts with their local health authority for 1993-94; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: All national health service trust hospitals in London[1] have agreed contracts with their host health authorities. Only two—the Royal Free Hospital NHS trust and the Royal London NHS trust have yet to be signed.

[1] London has been taken as the inner London health authorities identified in the "Report of the inquiry into London's Health Service, Medical Education and Research" namely: Bloomsbury and Islington, Camberwell, City and Hackney, Hampstead, Haringey, Lewisham and North Southwark, Newham, Parkside, Riverside, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth and West Lambeth district health authorities.

Nurses

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing the earnings of pupil nurses, grade A nurses aged under 18 years, grade A nurses aged over 18 years and nurses in each grade from B to I in real terms at January 1993 prices for each year since 1990-91; and if he will provide estimates for 1993-94 and 1994-95.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 25 May 1993]:* The available information is shown in the table. Estimates for 1993-94 and 1994-95 are not available.

Average earnings[1] of full-time staff at 1992-93 prices[2]

Nurses	*1990-91* £	*1991-92* £	*1992-93* £
Students/Pupils	7,990	8,670	9,070
Grade A[3]	9,030	9,210	9,710
Grade B	10,120	10,570	11,000
Grade C	12,100	12,500	12,820
Grade D	12,470	12,760	13,240
Grade E	14,340	14,800	15,430
Grade F	17,050	17,410	17,900
Grade G	18,750	19,290	19,370
Grade H	19,670	20,470	20,920
Grade I	22,560	23,310	23,530

Note:
[1] earnings are basic pay plus allowances
[2] Gross domestic product deflator used to calculate earnings in real terms
[3] age breakdown is not readily available

NHS Earnings

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing the earnings of medical and dental house officers, senior house officers, consultants on all scales, senior hospital medical and dental officers, hospital practitioners, consultants in public health medicine and senior dental officers in real terms at January 1993 prices for each year since 1990-91; and if she will provide estimates for 1993-94 and 1994-95.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 25 May 1993]:* The information which is available is shown in the table. Estimates for 1993-94 and 1994-95 are not available. The total earnings of hospital practitioners are not available on a comparable basis to other doctors in the hospital sector as they also receive earnings as general practitioners.

Average earnings[1] of full-time staff at 1992-93 prices[2]

	1990-91 £	*1991-92* £	*1992-93* £
House officers	15,890	16,920	19,550
Senior house officers	22,680	23,260	26,840
Senior dental officers	33,870	33,960	34,490
Consultants[3]	45,060	47,780	49,820
Consultants in Community Health Med.	46,240	46,640	47,570

[1] Earnings are basic pay plus allowances.
[2] Gross domestic product deflator is used to calculate earnings in real terms.
[3] Includes senior hospital medical and dental officers.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Citizenship

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has considered the recommendations of the Speaker's Commission on citizenship; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The recommendations of the 1990 report of the Commission on Citizenship have been considered in the Home Office.

The Government regard citizenship in its widest sense as an issue of fundamental importance and take every opportunity to encourage individuals and companies alike to be aware of, and act on, their responsibilities in the community. The wide-ranging report made a contribution to the discussion of these issues.

The report's recommendations covered many departmental interests and those falling within the Home Office's remit have been borne in mind in the course of its work.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for The Home Department how many applications have been made in each year since 1985 for registration as British nationals (overseas); and how many have been *(a)* granted, *(b)* refused and *(c)* are still pending.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Hong Kong British Dependent Territories citizens are entitled to BN(0) status and no applications have been refused. BN(0) registrations first took place in 1987. Applications received and registered since then are as follows:

	Applications	
Year	*Received*	*Registered*
[1]1987	18,366	16,275
1988	31,916	30,222
1989	53,222	49,519
1990	80,213	78,265
1991	101,534	107,423
1992	156,511	149,302
[2]1993	72,713	66,294
Total	514,475	497,300

[1] (from July).
[2] (to April).

The number of applications outstanding at end April 1993 was 17,175.

Fire Safety

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action Her Majesty's Government have taken to implement within the United Kingdom the fire safety provisions of the EC directives commonly known as the workplace and framework directives, by 31 December 1992.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Proposals to implement these provisions by regulations made under section 12 of the Fire Precautions Act 1971 were issued for consultation in May 1992. Many welcomed our proposals, but some valid criticisms emerged. We therefore decided that the draft regulations and associated guidance should not take effect on 1 January 1993, as originally planned.

We hope to issue revised proposals for Fire Precautions (Places of Work) Regulations and related guidance for consultation in the summer. This will enable us to consider any comments which we receive and make the regulations to take effect on or after 1 April 1994.

High Crime Areas

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with the Association of Chief Police Officers about the targeting of police resources to areas with a high incidence of crime.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Decisions about the use of resources are the responsibility of chief officers of police. These matters do not usually arise in our discussions with the Association of Chief Police Officers.

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what additional resources he will make available in the next two financial years to provide grants to people in the high crime areas for additional household and security measures.

Mr. Maclean: Home Office financial support for local crime prevention activity is channelled through the safer cities projects currently established in 20 high-crime areas in England. These projects provide financial and other assistance for crime prevention work which may include schemes for improving household security in accordance with locally determined priorities. The 16 longer-established projects—in Birmingham, Bradford, Bristol, Coventry, Hartlepool, Hull, Islington, Lewisham, Nottingham, Rochdale, Salford, Sunderland, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth, Wirral and Wolverhampton—each have a grants budget of £100,000 for the year ending 31 March 1994, by which date Home Office funding for these projects is due to come to an end. The four more recently established projects—in Derby, Hammersmith and Fulham, Leicester and Middlesborough—each have a grants budget of £250,000 for 1993-94; the size of these budgets in future years has yet to be determined.

A second phase of safer cities is to be established in areas which have not yet benefited from this initiative in accordance with the announcement made by my predecessor in reply to a question from the hon. Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight) on 11 January, column *601*, and the accompanying statement, a copy of which is in the Library. The grants budget for these new projects has yet to be determined.

In addition to this Home Office programme, Department of Environment programmes including estates action and city challenge also provide support for measures aimed at improving improved household security.

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to increase police resources in areas of rising crime.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This Government have provided very substantial additional resources to the police service. It is for chief constables to decide how to deploy their resources to the best effect within their force area. Forces are encouraged to look closely at how effectively their resources are deployed so as to meet the demands which are made of them.

Hong Kong

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications have been made in Hong Kong in each year since 1985 for naturalisation as British dependent territories citizens; and how many have been *(a)* granted, *(b)* refused and *(c)* are still pending.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is as follows:

Applications

Year	*Made*	*Granted*	*Refused*	*Withdrawn*
1985	844	704	152	86
1986	861	759	100	45
1987	1,233	808	70	23
1988	1,016	1,074	60	36
1989	3,098	1,098	73	26
1990	12,543	1,699	95	39
1991	7,588	11,463	399	270
1992	2,909	8,846	493	247
[1]1993	1,505	885	55	19
Totals	31,597	27,336	1,497	791

[1](to April).

Note: Year of application and year of determination are different in most cases.

The number of applications outstanding at the end of April 1993 was 2,981.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions are taking place on the provisions of the British Nationality Order under the Hong Kong Act 1984 on the acquisition of British national (overseas) status.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Discussions have been taking place between Her Majesty's Government, the Hong Kong Government and members of the Hong Kong Legislative Council. We expect to have further discussions with a delegation from the Legislative Council House Committee in London this week.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to alter either the time in which applications are permitted or the method of application for British National (Overseas) status for British dependent territories citizens in Hong Kong.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Work is in hand to prepare a draft Order in Council requiring applications for British National (Overseas) status to be made in time to allow the necessary work to be completed before the powers to register such applicants and issue them with BN(O) passports lapse on 1 July 1997. It is proposed to specify deadlines according to age group with provision for late applications to be considered where there are special circumstances. We have no plans for any change in the method of application.

Prison Population

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many young adult offenders were received into *(a)* Feltham prison, *(b)* Hull prison and *(c)* Leeds prison under sentence (i) in the last week for which figures are available, (ii) in the week ending 27 February and (iii) in the week ending 28 November 1992; and how many previous convictions they had individually and on average.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Alun Michael, dated June 1993:

RECEPTIONS INTO FELTHAM, HULL AND LEEDS

The Secretary of State has asked me in the absence of the Director General from the office to write to you directly in reply to your Parliamentary Question about the number of sentenced young adult offenders received into Feltham, Leeds and Hull prisons and how many previous convictions they had individually and on average.

The information on receptions for the periods you have requested is not yet available. The readily available information relates to the population of sentenced prisoners (aged under 21) at Leeds, Hull and Feltham on 30 November 1992 and 28 February and 30 April 1993 and is given in Table 1.

As regard previous convictions information for November 1992 is not available. Available information for previous convictions relates to inmates who were in the prison population of these establishments on 28 February and 30 April 1993 and is shown in Table 2. I am afraid that this table provides little useful information because, owing to a computer problem, it is not possible to distinguish prisoners with no previous convictions from those for whom this information is not recorded.

Table 1

Population aged under 21[1] under sentence in prison service establishments in England and Wales on: 30 November 1992, 28 February and 31 March 1993[2]

	Number of prisoners		
Date	*Leeds*	*Feltham*	*Hull*
30 November 1992	—	386	—
28 February 1993	—	448	—
30 April 1993	—	493	—

[1] Includes a small number of prisoners aged 21 held in the young offenders' institution at Feltham.
[2] Includes those sentenced for non-payment of a fine.

Table 2

Population under sentence in Feltham on 28 February and 30 April 1993 by previous convictions[1]

Date	*Population*	*Number of previous convictions*							
		Previous convictions nil or not recorded[2]	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6-10*	*11 and over*
28 February 1993	448	422	3	2	3	2	1	9	6
30 April 1993	493	473	3	2	3	1	1	6	4

[1] Previous conviction information is not recorded for persons committed for non-payment of a fine.
[2] Not separately identifiable.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the percentage of *(a)* men and *(b)* women under the age of 21 years who were part of the prison population in England and Wales on 24 May.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Tom Cox, dated June 1993:

Percentage of men and women aged under 21 who are part of the prison population in England and Wales

The Home Secretary has asked me in the absence of the Director General from the office, to write to you directly in reply to your Parliamentary Question about the percentage of *(a)* men and *(b)* women under the age of 21 years who were part of the prison population in England and Wales on 24 May 1993.

The last available information is based on the prison population aged under 21 on 30 April 1993. It shows that 0·39 per cent. of males aged 15 to 20 and 0·01 per cent. of females aged 15 to 20 in England and Wales were part of the prison population in Prison Service establishments on that date.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number of prisoners of United Kingdom nationality who were serving prison sentences in overseas countries who have been transferred to prisons in the United Kingdom to serve the remainder of their sentences in each of the last three years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Tom Cox, dated June 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your Question about the transfer to this country from abroad of prisoners of United Kingdom nationality.

The number of prisoners of United Kingdom nationality transferred to the United Kingdom to serve the remainder of their sentences is as follows:

Year	*Number*
1990	0
1991	14
1992	17

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for The Home Department what was the prison population in each of the 12 member states of the EC as of the latest available date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The latest available information on the prison population for all 12 member states of the EC relates to September 1990. These figures are in table 2 of the Council of Europe Prison Information Bulletin, No. 16, a copy of which is in the Library. Data for September 1991 have been collected independently from a number of EC countries and was given in reply to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) on 9 February, cols. *532-34*.

An article on "International comparisons of prison populations" by Collier and Tarling—Home Office research bulletin No. 23, pages 48 to 54—showed that the figures for different countries are unlikely to be strictly comparable because the definitions of prisons and prisoners vary from one country to another, reflecting different legal and administrative systems. Examples of

differences in the definitions are the inclusion or exclusion in a country's figures of juvenile offenders and mentally disordered offenders.

False Passports

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many false passports have been confiscated by immigration officers in each year from 1978;

(2) how many people have been arrested for trying to enter or leave the United Kingdom on a false passport in each year since 1987.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is not available in the form requested. The numbers of forged and improperly held travel documents detected by the Immigration Service at ports and airports in the United Kingdom since October 1988 are as follows:

	Number
[1]1988	613
1989	2,134
1990	3,772
1991	3,730
1992	2,809

[1] (1 October to 31 December only).

Asylum

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the signatories of the Dublin convention determining the state responsible for examining an application for asylum submitted in one of the member states of the European Communities have now ratified that convention.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Five—Denmark, Greece, Italy, Portugal and the United Kingdom; and I understand that in Luxembourg the parliamentary procedures necessary for ratification have been completed.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a copy of the proposal presented to the Ministers responsible for immigration at their meeting on 30 November in London of the ad hoc group, immigration, for a manual of European asylum practices.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The paper containing the proposal was a working document of no lasting significance. But I shall place in the Library a copy of the manual itself—a compilation of texts on asylum adopted by Ministers responsible for immigration.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how the report approved by the Ministers responsible for immigration in their meeting in London on 30 November on countries on which there is generally no serious risk of persecution will be implemented into the United Kingdom law or practice in respect of asylum.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We have no present plans formally to designate any countries of origin of asylum seekers as ones in which there is generally no serious risk of persecution. However, the framework contained in the ministerial conclusions is a useful guide for the assessment of conditions in particular countries in the consideration of individual asylum claims.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken or plans to take to implement into domestic legislation the resolution on manifestly unfounded applications for asylum agreed at the Westminster meeting of the Ministers responsible for immigration.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill is consistent with the principles of this resolution. We have no plans for any further legislation on this subject.

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the cost to date and the expected future cost of his Department's market-testing programme; how many staff are engaged full time in work relating to market testing; which firms of consultants have been used in connection with the market-testing programme; and how they were selected.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The cost of the Home Office market-testing programme between November 1991 until March 1993 was £1·036 million. The number of staff employed full time on market testing as at 1 June 1993 was 56. The future cost of market testing will be determined by the nature of subsequent market-testing programmes.

The Department has used the following external consultancies:

Arthur Walton and Partners
Corporate Renewal Associates
Ernst and Young
Peat Marwick
LEK
PA Consulting
Price Waterhouse
Shreeveport
Touche Ross
Worthy Associates

Our policy is for consultants to be engaged as a result of a competitive tender process unless there are particular circumstances which warrant single tender action.

Local Authority Prosecutions

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to be in a position to reply to the letter dated 17 February from the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed enclosing representations from Castle Morpeth council about local authority prosecutions and the Criminal Justice Act.

Mr. Howard: I wrote to the right hon. Member on 4 June.

Electoral System

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made on his Department's review of electoral law and procedures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The five working groups which are looking at different aspects of the electoral process are expected to report their findings during the summer. When they have done so, representatives of the political parties, returning officers and the local authority associations will be invited to discuss the reports at a meeting in the autumn.

Escapes

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many recorded instances of escapes from Crown courts have occurred in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Alun Michael, dated June 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question asking how many recorded instances of escapes from Crown Courts have occurred in each of the last 10 years.

The information requested is available centrally only for prisoners who have escaped from Crown Courts since 20 June 1988. The number of Crown Court escapes since that date is set out in the table below:

	Incidents	*Prisoners*
[1]1988	9	9
1989	9	11
1990	8	11
1991	10	12
1992	10	10

[1](from 20 June 1988).

Foreign Prisoners

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of foreign nationals serving prison sentences in the United Kingdom who have been transferred to their country of origin to serve the remainder of their prison sentences in each of the last three years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Tom Cox, dated June 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your Question about the transfer of prisoners of foreign nationality to their country of origin.

The number of foreign nationals transferred from the United Kingdom to their country of origin there to serve the remainder of their sentence is as follows:

1990	*1991*	*1992*
13	18	17

Mr. Maurice Bland

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for what reasons certain privileges have been withdrawn from prisoner Mr. Maurice Bland.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Mr. Bland has been at Rudgate prison since his transfer from Lindholme prison on 21 April 1993. No privileges have been withdrawn from him.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when he expects to implement the recommendation of December 1992 that Mr. Maurice Bland be transferred from HMP Rudgate to an open prison; and what is the reason for the delay;

(2) when he will implement to recommendations of the Parole Board in respect of Mr. Maurice Bland.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Parole Board recommendation that Mr. Bland should be transferred to an open prison was implemented on 12 March 1993 when he was transferred to HMP Rudgate. The board also recommended that a further review of the case should be carried out after 12 months and that home leave should commence as soon as possible after transfer. Mr. Bland has been informed that an internal review of his case will be held in April 1994, and that he will be able to take short home leave six months after arrival at Rudgate.

Greyhound Racing

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has completed his consultative discussions on the deregulation of the greyhound totalisator and on section 19 of the Betting and Gaming and Lotteries Act 1963; and when he expects to announce the results.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The proposals for changes to the statutory controls on greyhound racing are under active consideration in consultation with the industry and local authorities. We hope to report our conclusions by early summer.

Violent Crime

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he plans to take to curb the increase in crimes of violence and sexual attacks.

Mr. Maclean: The Government are committed to tackling all crime, including that part of it—5 per cent. of all recorded crime—which is violent or sexual, across a broad front. With Government support and with the support of the whole community, the police will continue to give a high priority to the prevention and detection of crimes involving sex or violence, where there is already a high clear-up rate, and to encourage victims, not least victims of racial or domestic violence, to report offences.

We will also keep under constant review the penalties available to the courts. For the worst sorts of crime, including homicide, rape, robbery and the most serious wounding, life imprisonment is already available. The Government believe that violent and sexual offending should be severely punished. That is why the Criminal Justice Act 1991 provides courts with powers to impose a longer sentence than would be justified by the seriousness of the offence alone upon a violent or sexual offender if such a sentence is necessary to protect the public from further harm. We will not hesitate to take further measures, if we are convinced that they are necessary.

Shotgun Thefts

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many thefts of shotguns were reported for each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Maclean: The number of offences of burglary and theft in which shotguns were reported to have been stolen for the last three years can be found in table 3.11 of Criminal Statistics, England and Wales 1991. Copies of this publication are in the Library.

Airport Detention Centres

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which private firms hold contracts for providing security at the detention centres at *(a)* Heathrow, *(b)* Gatwick and *(c)* Stansted.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Custodial services at the immigration detention centres at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted are provided under contract by Group 4 Total Security Ltd.

Race Relations

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people are employed under the current provisions for funding under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966; and what research has been carried out into the future level of activities so funded.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information is not kept in the form requested in the first part of the question. However, currently 10,066·5 full-time equivalent posts are approved for section 11 funding. The grant is intended to support the cost of employing staff to provide services additional to those provided by local authorities and others. The assessment of need is in the first instance a matter for local authorities and other bodies eligible for grant, in the light of local circumstances.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to increase the funding available for grants under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 in the light of the proposed extension of the criteria for funding under the Act.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no such plans at present. Within existing cash limits, extension of the scope of section 11 beyond members of ethnic minorities of new Commonwealth origin would enable local authorities and other grant recipients to re-prioritise their requirements for section 11 grant if they saw a need to do so.

Ex-prisoners

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were discharged from prison without permanent accommodation during the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: This information has not routinely been collected in the past, but consideration is now being given to arrangements for its regular collection in the future. A sample undertaken in the National Prison Survey 1991 then indicated that 9 per cent. of prisoners near their release date said they would become owner-occupiers on release, 40 per cent. said they would go into rented accommodation, 30 per cent. said they would live with their parents or other adult relations, 10 per cent. said they would live in a hostel or other temporary accommodation and 6 per cent. said they would have nowhere to live.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to take account of views of organisations representing victims of crime in the forthcoming White Paper reviewing the criminal injuries compensation scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: As my right hon. and learned Friend the member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) has already announced on 23 November 1992, col *457*, the Government have decided that the present criminal injuries compensation scheme should be replaced by a tariff based scheme in 1994. The intention is to offer a quicker, more straightforward, service to claimants. Details of the new scheme will be set out in a White Paper in the summer. The Criminal Injuries Compensation Board and the national charity, Victim Support, have already submitted papers on the matter; but their comments, and those which other interested organisations or individuals may wish to make, will also be welcome after the White Paper is published.

Prison Officers (Assaults)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he is taking to combat a further rise in assaults on prison officers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated June 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about measures to combat a further rise in assaults on prison officers.

The increase in assaults on staff is of great concern to the Prison Service. Indeed, one of our key performance indicators is the number of assaults on staff and others. Initiatives to combat the increase include: the analysis of incidents to identify factors leading to assaults; the introduction of a new intelligence-handling system; the creation of smaller, more manageable living units by sub-dividing wings; and the development of skills in stress management and anger control.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison officers were assaulted in each of the last five years; and if he will give details of those assaults.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General, who has been asked to arrange for a reply.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated June 1993:

ASSAULTS ON PRISON OFFICERS

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to write to you directly in reply to your Parliamentary Question about the number of assaults on prison officers in each of the last five years.

The available information is for the number of assaults, committed at Prison Service establishments in England and Wales, which were punished under the prison discipline system. Data are not available prior to April 1989 as assaults on prison officers, staff and others were grouped together in

a single category "Gross Personal Violence". Between April and December 1989, 1,260 assaults on prison officers were recorded. Comparable figures for 1990 and 1991 show 1,850 and 2,026 assaults respectively. Provisional figures for 1992 show 2,344 assaults against prison officers.

Information for 1989, 1990 and 1991 was taken from the corresponding editions of "Statistics of Offences Against Prison Discipline and Punishments, England and Wales" (Cm 1236, 1651 and 2066, Tables 10, 12 and 14 of 1989 edition and Tables 9, 10 and 11 of the 1990 and 1991 editions) copies of which are held in the Library. These show the establishments at which the assaults took place. No other details of the assaults are recorded centrally.

Drugs

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures police forces are taking in conjunction with local education authorities to warn pupils of the dangers of drug taking.

Mr. Maclean: All police forces in England and Wales have police/schools liaison programmes formed in partnership with local education authorities, where police officers visit school pupils with the aim of fostering young people's awareness of their rights and responsibilities as citizens. Discussion about the dangers of drugs is a common topic with older pupils.

The police are also involved with many drugs prevention schemes initiated by other agencies, particularly those supported by the Home Office drugs prevention initiative teams. Examples of the police contribution there include: anti-drugs poster campaigns, the distribution of a free "phone card" with the numbers of drugs helpline services, and co-operation with the entertainment industry to prevent drug-misuse at rave venues.

Firearms

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his estimate of the number of shotguns and the number of other firearms licensed in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Estimates of the number of shotguns and of other firearms licensed can be found in paragraphs 4 and 9 of Home Office statistical bulletin "Firearms Certificates Statistics, England and Wales 1991". Copies of this publication can be found in the Library.

Police: Public Ratio

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the proportion of police to public in the north-west region; and what is the comparative figure for the rest of England and Wales.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In the north-west inspectorial region, which consists of the Cumbria, Cheshire, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Merseyside and North Wales police forces, there is an average of one officer to 386 people. The comparable figure for the rest of England and Wales is 1:404.

Sheehy Report

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what date he expects the Sheehy report to be published.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has agreed to extend the timetable for publication of the report to the end of June 1993.

Victim Support

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response he has given to the report from the organisation Victim Support on aid for victims, a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Maclean: My hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) wrote to Victim Support on 31 March in response to its paper "Band Aid for Victims?", commenting on a number of the specific points which it had raised and promising that its views would be borne in mind as we prepared the White Paper which will set out our more detailed plans for the new tariff scheme to replace the present criminal injuries compensation scheme next year. The intention is to publish the White Paper in the summer.

Prison Contracts

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison service governors and Home Office civil servants have switched to private companies involved in bids for prison contracts in the last three years; and if he will give details.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is not possible to give precise information about the numbers of former Prison Service governors and Home Office civil servants who may have taken up employment with private companies involved in bids for prison contracts in the last three years, since staff below grade 3 who wish to take up outside employment are required to seek approval to do so for a period of only two years after leaving Crown employment and in certain specified circumstances. Six former members of the Home Office have sought and obtained approval under these procedures to take up employment with private companies which have been involved in bids for prison contracts. All were governor grades; three were governing establishments; one was a head of custody in an establishment; one was in the inspectorate of prisons; and one in the remands contracts unit. In addition, a former police superintendent on secondment to the remands contracts unit was given approval to take up employment with such a company.

Devon and Cornwall Police

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers were employed by the Devon and Cornwall police authority as at 31 December 1992.

Mr. Charles Wardle: At the end of December 1992 there were 2,920 police officers in the Devon and Cornwall constabulary.

Security Firms

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will bring forward proposals to require security firms to notify his Department of *(a)* directors and *(b)* employees who are convicted criminals.

Mr. Maclean: We have no plans to do so. The Government's policy is to encourage the self-regulation of the security industry.

Crime Support Organisations

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all those organisations funded by him which give support and assistance to *(a)* victims of crime and *(b)* their families; and in each case state what funding from Government they have received in each of the last three financial years.

Mr. Maclean: The Home Office pays grant to the national charity Victim Support and helps to fund the criminal injuries compensation scheme. The Scottish Office separately funds Victim Support Scotland and contributes to Government funding of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board. Victim Support provides emotional help and practical support to victims of crime and their families through a network of some 400 local schemes and branches. CICB awards compensation to victims of crime and, where the victim has died as a result of criminal injury, to dependants of the victim.

Home Office funding in the last three financial years was as follows:

£ million

	1990-91	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Victim Support	4·7	5·7	7·3
CICB[1]	119·6	156·7	166·7

[1] Includes the contribution from the Scottish Office.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

CSCE

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress made to date in *(a)* the conflict prevention centre and consultative committee, *(b)* the office for democratic institutions and human rights, *(c)* the commission on national minorities, *(d)* the forum for security co-operation, *(e)* the Vienna group and *(f)* the parliamentary assembly of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The 1990 Paris charter set up the conflict prevention centre and consultative committee, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the parliamentary assembly, as part of the CSCE's efforts to promote security, democracy and respect for human rights in Europe. These institutions are adapting well to the new demands placed on them and are supported now by the Forum for Security Co-operation and the High Commissioner on National Minorities agreed at Helsinki in July 1992. The Council of Ministers at Stockholm in December 1992 provided for more effective decision making in the CSCE by establishing the Vienna group of the committee of senior officials. It also appointed a Secretary General and laid the foundation for a single organisational structure for the CSCE in Vienna. The institutions are lightly staffed but are contributing to the CSCE's varied activities notably in the resolution of disputes and preventive diplomacy.

Royal Family

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the total expenditure by his Department over the past 10 years on items connected with members of the royal family; and what is the itemised breakdown of such expenditure.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The cost to the Department of royal visits overseas at the request of Government Departments during the last 10 years was £4,241,700, broken down as follows:

	£
1983-84	409,800
1984-85	316,100
1985-86	388,200
1986-87	382,500
1987-88	386,600
1988-89	396,400
1989-90	424,000
1990-91	464,000
1991-92	620,800
[1]1992-93	453,300

[1] Bills presented to date.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the practice of his Department regarding financial assistance for members of the royal family to purchase items of clothing for overseas visits.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Department provides financial assistance to members of the royal family to cover expenses necessarily incurred in the performance of official duties overseas; this includes a contribution to clothing expenses.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 21 May, *Official Report*, column *350*, which visits and of what duration were made at Government Department's request during the financial year 1992-93 by *(a)* the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh, *(b)* the Prince and Princess of Wales and *(c)* other members of the royal family; and who made each of the visits by other members of the royal family.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Overseas visits were made by the following members of the royal family at Government Department's request during the financial year 1992-93:

(a) The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh:
12 May—France
27-31 May—Malta
13-14 July—USA
9-12 June—France
19-23 October—Germany
11-20 March—Dominica, Montserrat, Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands

(b) The Prince and the Princess of Wales:
10-15 May—Egypt
2-5 November—Korea
5-7 November—Hong Kong
13-15 November—France
17-19 November—France
12-14 February—USA
14-18 February—Mexico
2-6 March—Nepal

(c) Other members of the Royal Family:
Prince Edward:
2-18 October—British Indian Ocean Territory, Brunei, Western Samoa

The Princess Royal:
11-19 May—Finland, Sweden, Norway
10-15 September—India

Princess Margaret:
23-25 June—Netherlands

Duke and Duchess of Gloucester:
12-13 October—Belgium

Duke of Kent:
14-23 May—Japan
30 June-1 July—Italy
9-10 November—Germany

Princess Alexandra:
22-25 April—USA
30 October-7 November—Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada

Overseas Visits (Clothing)

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will list by name and status all individuals who have received financial assistance from his Department over the past 10 years to purchase items of clothing for overseas visits; and what was the amount of each of such payments.

Mr. Goodlad: In the diplomatic wing, the payments derive from an officer's entitlement to a climatic clothing allowance when he or she is posted to a country where the climate is different from that in the United Kingdom. The allowance for a single officer is £468, with an additional £42 for "cold" countries, irrespective of the officer's grade. The figures for married officers are £712 and £309. Officers posted in the United Kingdom who go to such countries on an official visit may receive an accountable advance of this allowance. The rates are for visits of two months or less £187 plus "cold" supplement of £17; and for visits of more than two months £280 plus "cold" supplement of £26. In the aid wing, permanent staff making short visits are entitled to £295 in a three-year period, and contract officers up to £220. For travel over 16 weeks or for an overseas posting, there is an additional entitlement to £215 for single and £310 for married officers. Details of individual advances over the past 10 years are not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate effort and cost.

Iraq

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations the Government will now undertake to the United Nations in relation to repeated violations of United Nations resolutions by the Iraqi Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Iraq continues flagrantly to defy the United Nation's authority across the board, including the mandatory requirements of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 687, which established the ceasefire and UNSCR 688, which condemns the repression of the Iraqi civilian population in many parts of Iraq.

We raise Iraqi violations of UNSCRS at the United Nations on every suitable occasion. At the 13th review of economic sanctions by the Security Council on 24 May, the United Kingdom Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Sir David Hannay, listed areas of Iraq's non-compliance with the relevant UNSCRs. The Security Council concluded once more that there were no grounds for the lifting or the easing of sanctions against Iraq. We will continue to insist that sanctions should not be lifted until Iraq complies fully with all the relevant UNSCRs.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he proposes to take in the UN Security Council following the attack by Iranian fighter jets on the territory of Iraq on 25 May.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have expressed our serious concern to the Iranian authorities at Iran's air-raids inside Iraq. The UN Security Council is permanently seized of this issue as part of the process of implementing Security Council Resolution 598 which laid down the terms of the ceasefire at the end of the Iran/Iraq war in 1988.

Departmental Buildings

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the buildings currently owned or rented by his Department and the Overseas Development Administration, together with *(a)* the estimated value, *(b)* the annual rent and *(c)* the annual maintenance cost of each building in the current financial year.

Mr. Goodlad: The information requested in respect of individual buildings is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Provisions contained within the FCO Supply Estimate for 1993-94 are as follows:

	Rentals £ million	*Maintenance £ million*
FCO		
Home	*(a)* 35·9	*(b)* 7·3
Overseas	47·5	19·9
ODA		
Home	9·3	1·4
Overseas	Apart from one building all ODA accommodation included in Diplomatic Wing baseline	

Notes:
(a) Paid to Property Holdings for occupation of buildings on both common user and departmental estates.
(b) Includes the works charge paid to Property Holdings for its maintenance responsibilities for the common user estate.

Iran

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action the Government will take following the air raid on 25 May by Iranian jets against two bases in Iraq of the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have expressed our serious concern to the Iranian authorities at the air raids carried out by Iran inside Iraq, as we have also done on previous similar occasions.

Kashmir

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how he intends to raise the issue of human rights violations in Kashmir during the course of the forthcoming Commonwealth conference; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The agenda for the Commonwealth Heads of Government conference to be held in Cyprus in October is still under discussion. We have frequently raised the issue of human rights in Kashmir with the Indian Government and will continue to use appropriate opportunities to do so.

Relocation and Amalgamations

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the sections and organisations within his Department for which there are plans for relocation or amalgamation.

Mr. Goodlad: The diplomatic wing plans to relocate a small number of posts in 1993 and 1994. Otherwise, there are no plans to relocate or amalgamate sections and organisations of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Gibraltar

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many applications for exemption under section 12(2) of the Immigration Control Ordinance (Gibraltar) the Governor of Gibraltar has received for each year since 1988; how many of these have been received from *(a)* EC nationals, *(b)* Moroccan and *(c)* Indian nationals over the same period; and how many applications have been rejected by nationality.

Mr. Garel-Jones: A total of 102 applications were received for exemption under section 12(2) of Gibraltar's Immigration Control Ordinance since 1988 to date broken down by year and nationality of applicant as follows:

Year	*Total*	*EC*	*Moroccan*	*Indian*	*Others*
1988	23	12	8	2	1
1989	24	13	7	1	3
1990	16	8	7	1	0
1991	13	5	6	2	0
1992	25	5	10	3	7
1993	1	1	—	—	—

The total number of refusals was 48 broken down by nationality of applicant as follows:

	Number
EC nationals	12
Moroccan nationals	28
Indian nationals	5
Others	3

Mr. Christopher Ian Scott

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action was taken by Her Majesty's Government to arrange for the extradition of Mr. Christopher Ian Scott from Spain between March 1992 and December 1992 on the basis of the warrant for his extradition issue by West Midlands police on 8 March 1990.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The British embassy in Madrid has remained in touch with the Spanish Government about Mr. Scott's extradition to the United Kingdom. The case is complicated by a charge in Spain outstanding against Mr. Scott for which he remains remanded in custody there. His extradition to the United Kingdom will take place only once the outstanding charge has been resolved, in accordance with article 19 of the European convention on extradition.

Non-proliferation Treaty Conference

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library texts of all the submissions made by representatives of Her Majesty's Government to, and all of the official documents of, the 1995 NPT conference preparatory committee meeting held in New York in May.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A copy of the statement delivered by the head of the United Kingdom delegation and copies of the official documents tabled at the preparatory committee meeting have been deposited in the Library of the House.

Cyprus

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Greek Government regarding the number of settlers from mainland Greece who have emigrated to southern Cyprus.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Questions of settlement and property rights for both communities in Cyprus are intrinsic to the United Nations "Set of Ideas", endorsed by the Security Council as the basis of a settlement. We have urged acceptance of the "Set of Ideas" on both sides, including when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs met Cypriot Foreign Minister Mr. Michaelides on 12 May.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many non-Cypriots have been permitted by the Greek-Cypriot authorities to settle in southern Cyprus since 1963; and what is the estimated total population of southern Cyprus.

Mr. Garel-Jones: According to figures given by the Republic of Cyprus, the population of the area in question was estimated at 575,000, of whom 10,529 were resident aliens. We have no figures for immigration since 1963.

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Greek-Cypriot authorities regarding Turkish-Cypriot men, women and children who went missing in 1963, 1967 and 1974.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We support the efforts of the United Nations intercommunal committee on missing persons; but its efforts depend on full co-operation from both sides.

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to make an official visit to Cyprus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Our aim is to give effective support to the continuing inter-communal negotiations on Cyprus under United Nations auspices. This year my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has continued to have frequent

meetings with Cypriot Ministers, and other parties to the dispute, in London and elsewhere. The timing of any possible visit to Cyprus must be carefully considered in that light.

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Greek and Greek-Cypriot troops he estimates are under arms in Cyprus.

Mr. Garel-Jones: According to official figures of the Republic of Cyprus, the strength of the Greek Cypriot national guard is 10,000. In addition there is a regiment of 950 men of the Greek Army, plus 1,100 secondees from the Greek army to the Greek Cypriot national guard.

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many people are estimated to have been killed in Cyprus in connection with the political situation *(a)* between independence and 1974 and *(b)* 1975 and the present date.

Mr. Garel-Jones: No definitive figures are available. The United Nations committee on missing persons is attempting to trace and account for those reported missing in the earlier period.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make representations to the Greek Cypriot régime regarding Turkish-Cypriot homes and farms occupied by Greek-Cypriots in southern Cyprus.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Questions of settlement and property rights for both communities in Cyprus are intrinsic to the United Nations "Set of Ideas", endorsed by the Security Council as the basis of a settlement. We have urged acceptance of the "Set of Ideas" on both sides, including when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs met Cypriot Foreign Minister Mr. Michaelides on 12 May.

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British tourists visited the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in each of the last three years.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The following are our estimated figures for British tourists visiting the north of Cyprus in the last three years:

	Number
1990	40,000
1991	30,000
1992	40,000

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of his time the British High Commissioner in Cyprus spends in the north of the island.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We do not recognise the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" or its "government". As a consequence, the High Commissioner himself spends considerably less of his time in the north of the island. However, we take care to keep in close touch with the Turkish Cypriot community at all levels, including through him; and members of his staff have regular and frequent dealings with the Turkish Cypriots.

China

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Government of the People's Republic of China on the deaths of Bishop Liu Difen and Liu Mangping.

Mr. Goodlad: We are disturbed about reports of the deaths of the two bishops mentioned and are seeking to establish the facts. We regularly raise human rights, including the persecution of religious believers, with the Chinese authorities.

Hong Kong

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to visit Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: I visited Hong Kong from 29 May to 1 June. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no plans at present to visit Hong Kong.

Blackpool Football Club

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Spanish Government about the arrest and detention in Majorca of Trevor Sinclair of Blackpool football club; whether he will protest to the Spanish Government about the mistreatment by the Majorcan police of other members of the Blackpool team; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Mr. Sinclair was arrested on 18 May for damaging property. After his release the next day he made no complaint to Her Majesty's consul about his treatment by the Spanish authorities. We received no complaints from other members of the Blackpool football team. If they have any to make I shall be glad to look into the matter.

Drug Abuse

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the adequacy of current United Nations policies to combat drug abuse; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Nations with primary responsibility for action against drugs is the United Nations international drug control programme (UNDCP). Since its formation in 1991, the UNDCP has developed a wide range of programmes to deal with all aspects of drugs including cultivation, processing, trafficking and consumption. The United Kingdom is one of the major donors. It is too soon to make a firm assessment of UNDCP. But the programme is expanding its activities steadily and establishing itself as the co-ordinating agency with the United Nations system.

Bosnia

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps the Government are taking to ensure the closure of all roads leading into Bosnia from the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: President Milosevic's undertaking to close the border between Serbia/Montenegro and Bosnia to all non-humanitarian supplies has resulted in a significant reduction of cross-border traffic, but some movement of goods continues. Talks are taking place in the United Nations on a draft Security Council resolution to deploy international border monitors. President Milosevic at present refuses to accept the presence of such monitors. The international community is intensifying pressure on him to change this position.

Tibet

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of the People's Republic of China about events in Tibet; and what response he has received.

Mr. Goodlad: We are deeply concerned by the recent reports of arrests and disturbances in Tibet. EC ambassadors, who visited Tibet on 17-23 May, raised the reported arrests with the authorities there and urged that those detained be released. On 1 June the presidency issued, on behalf of the Community and member states, a public statement reiterating concern about the recent events and the general human rights situation in Tibet and calling for dialogue without preconditions between the Chinese authorities and the representatives of the Tibetans including the Dalai Lama.

Middle East

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the peace process in the Palestine/Israeli dispute.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The ninth round of bilateral negotiations between Israel and the Arab parties took place in Washington from 27 April to 13 May. There are welcome indications that all parties engaged in serious discussion of substantive matters. We hope that talks will resume soon and build on what has been achieved.

EC Council of Ministers

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community's Council of Ministers.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The following meetings are planned:

1 June:—Employment and Social Affairs
1-2 June:—Trevi Meeting/Meetings of Ministers for Immigration
7 June:—ECOFIN
7–8 June:—Transport
8 June:—Foreign Affairs Council
11 June:—Education
14 June:—Internal Market
15 June:—Agriculture
16 June:—Telecommunications
24–26 June:—Fisheries
25–26 June:—Energy
28–29 June:—Environment
30 June:—Research

The following subjects are likely to be discussed:—

(a) *Employment and Social Affairs—1 June*
Proposal for a directive on fishing vessels (5680/93)
Proposal for a recommendation on access to continuing vocational training (6671/93)
Proposal for a directive on European works council (4466/91); 8319/91)
Proposal for a directive on the organisation of working time (8145/92; 4384/93)
Proposal for a directive on the protection of young people at work (4690/93; 6346/93)

(b) *Trevi Meeting/Meetings of Ministers for Immigration, 1–2 June*
Report to European Council on free movement of people
Various immigration and asylum matters
'Europol'

(c) *ECOFIN—7 June* (Provisional)
Approval of the provisional agenda
(Possibly) Approval of the list of 'A' items
Economic recovery and convergence programmes
Proposal for a Council Directive on deposit guarantee schemes (0) (Legal Basis: EEC Treaty—Article 57)
Inter-institutional Agreement on Budgetary Discipline
Fraud against the Community budget
Commission's report on the Fight against Fraud in 1992
Relations with Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union
euratom loans
Community guarantee to the EIB against losses under loans for projects in Albania (0)
(legal basis: EEC Treaty—Article 235)
CO_2/energy tax
7th VAT Directive
Withholding tax on interest and royalties (0)
(Legal basis: EEC Treaty—Article 100)

(d) *Transport—7-8 June*
Transport Infrastructure Regulation (8065/92 Trans 99, 10437/92 Trans 163)
White Paper on Common Transport Policy (11011/92 Trans 181 MAR 77 AER 80)
Aviation External Relations (5080/90 AER 16, 4146/93 AER 1)
(Aviation) Computerised Reservations Systems (4236/93 AER 3)
Relations with Switzerland (Commission Report)
Trans-European Networks: (A) Combined Transport Network; 8066/92 Trans 100, Annex 2, (B) Road Network: 8065/92 Trans 99, Part IV (C) Inland Waterways Network: 8065/92 Trans 99, Part V
Land Transport: (A) Road Transport Taxation; 4227/88 Trans 10 Fisc 9, 4714/92 Fisc 17 Trans 21, 9656/92 Fisc 171 Trans 138, (B) Road Haulage Cabotage; 10083/91 Trans 197, 7662/92 Trans 95, 10881/92 Trans 180, (C) Transport from and towards Greece
Maritime Transport: (A) Maritime Safety; 5038/93 Mar 16 Env 57, 4390/93 PV/Cons 3 Trans 5 Env 25, (B) (Poss) Presentation of Commission proposals: (I) Classification societies; (II) Minimum level of education for the maritime professions.

Any Other Business
Road Safety (presentation of the Commission Communication)
Technical Harmonisation of Community Railways (Commission Statement)
Promotion of Combined Transport (Commission Statement)
Application of Rules of Competition to Maritime Transport (Statement by the German delegation)
Application of Regulation (EEC) No. 4055/86 (Statement by the United Kingdom delegation)
State Aid for Civil Aviation (Contribution by the Commission)

(e) *Foreign Affairs Council—8 June*
Relations with the European Parliament:
Preparation of proposed Inter-institutional meeting
Access to information:
Second Commission Communication
Structural Funds

Enlargement negotiations:
Preparation for four ministerial meetings
Relations with Central and Eastern Europe
Relations with Russia
Ex-Yugoslavia
Trade policy questions
EC/Korea relations:
Commission Communication
Preparation of European Council, 21-22 June

(f) *Education—11 June*
Educational initiatives in Favour of Involving All Young People in Working and Social Life
Guidelines for Community Action in the Field of Education and Training
Furthering an Open European Space in Higher Education
Draft Resolution of the Council on Vocational Education and Training in the 1990s
Long-term possibilities for reform of the European Schools
Responses to the HE and Vocational Training Memoranda
Working Group on HE Quality Assessment
Development of Pilot EC/US co-operation in HE
Proposed European Week for Scientific Culture

(g) *Internal Market Council—14 June*
Agenda unavailable

(h) *Agriculture—14-15 June*
(Poss) Price fixing (Com 93/36)
(Poss) Milk quotas—SLOM 111
(Poss) Potatoes (10483/92; 6736/93)
(Poss) Sugar (4632/93; 6403/93)
(Poss) Non-Rotational set-aside (6744/93; 6745/93)
(Poss) Cereal Standard Quality (5404/93; 6546/93)
(Poss) Spain, Greece, Italy Milk Quotas (5404/93; 6546/93)
GATT—Agricultural (5813/93; 6612/93)
(Poss) Plant breeders rights
(Poss) Minced Meat

(i) *Telecommunications—16 June*
HDTV (COM(92) 154 FINAL)
Telecommunications liberalisation (COM(93) 159 FINAL)
Postal Services Green Paper (COM(91) 476 FINAL)
Satellite Earth Station Equipment Directive (COM(29) 451 FINAL)

(j) *Fisheries—25 June*
Control system for the Commons Fisheries Policy (9019/92)
EC Fisheries Agreement with Argentina
Spanish/Portuguese Accession (4158/93)
Harmonised technical conversation measures in the Mediterranean (11229/92)
EC negotiating mandate with the Russian Federation

(k) *Energy—25 June*
Save energy efficiency directive (Adoption) (7847/92)
Altemer new and renewables programme (Adoption) (7757/92)
Directives on the liberalisation of Electricity and Gas (Debate) (4911/92)
Hydrocarbons licensing directive (6566/92, 4180/93)
Nuclear safety and energy supply in Eastern Europe and former Soviet Union (Council Conclusions)
Coal state aid (Discussion) (4669/93)
Energy Charter (Discussion)

(l) *Environment—28–29 June*
Hazardous Waste Incineration Directive—5761/92
Volatile Organic Compounds (Stage 1) Directive—8348/92
Directive on CO_2 Emissions from Cars
CITES Regulation—10500/91
Carbon/Energy Tax—7018/92
Emissions from Motor Vehicles Directive—4437/93
Ratification of the Biodiversity Convention—4593/93
Revisions to the Birds Directive—5185/91

(m) *Research—30 June*
Fourth RND Framework Programme (Inc Management)
(Poss) Technology Initiative for Disable and Elderly People
(Poss) EC Statistics

A formal meeting of the *Labour and Social Affairs Council* is planned for Tuesday 1 June. The agenda has not yet been finalised, but the directives on working time, fishing vessels, Protection of Young Workers and European Works Councils are likely to be discussed. Further possible agenda items include the recommendation on access to training and the resolution on flexible retirement. There may also be a discussion of a Commission initiative on employment.

The *Trevi Meeting/Meetings of Ministers for Immigration* will take place on 1–2 June and will discuss the report to the European Council on free movement of people. Ministers will also discuss various immigration and asylum matters as well as "EUROPOL".

The *Economic and Finance Council* will meet on 7 June to discuss action to promote economic recovery in Europe consistent with the conclusions of the Edinburgh European Council. Discussion will also take place on the United Kingdom convergence programme; the inter-institutional agreement on budget discipline; matters relating to Community action to combat fraud against the Community Budget; and carbon/energy tax. The Council may consider the directive concerning the Commission's proposals for an EC cross-boarder interest and royalty payments; Euratom loans for nuclear power stations in the former Soviet union; EIB lending to Albania; and the proposal for a council directive on deposit guarantee schemes. The proposal to amend the 7th VAT Directive (Special VAT regime for second-hand goods, works of art, antique and collectors' items) may be discussed at this meeitng.

The *Transport Council* on 7/8 June will discuss a full and wide ranging agenda. Ministers will be keen to reach agreement on the Transport Infrastructure Regulation after the European Parliament invoked the "conciliation procedure". They will also wish to make further progress on the complex negotiations on Road Haulage Cabotage and Road Transport Taxation.

Other issues will include: 'aviation external relations'; 'computer reservation systems'; the 'white paper on common transport policy'; 'relations with Switzerland'; 'Trans-European Networks—Combined Transport/Road/Inland waterways'; 'transport to and from Greece—prompted by the troubles in the former Yugoslavia'; and 'maritime safety'.

In addition they *may* discuss the Commission proposals on 'classification societies' and 'minimum levels of education for the maritime professions'.

Under other business the Commission will be presenting statements on: 'road safety'; 'technical harmonisation of Community railways'; the 'promotion of combined transport'; and 'state aid for civil aviation'. Finally the German delegation will be making a statement on the 'application of competition to maritime transport' and the UK delegation on the 'application of Regulation 4055/86."

The *Foreign Affairs Council* will meet on 8 June and will discuss Relations with the European Parliament, Preparation of the proposed Inter-Institutional meeting and Second Commission Communication on access to Information. Ministers will also discuss Structural Funds and Enlargement Negotiations; Preparation for four Ministerial meetings. Relations with Central and Eastern Europe, Relations with Russia and the Ex-Yugoslavia will also be discussed. Trade Policy Questions, EC/Korea Relations: Commission Communication and Preparation of European Council on 21-22 June are also scheduled for discussion.

The *Education Council* will be meeting on 11 June. Ministers will discuss Educational Initiatives involving young people in working and social life, guidelines for Community action in the field of education and training and about furthering an open European Space in Higher Education. Also down for discussion are the Draft Resolution of the Council on Vocational Education and Training in the 1990's, the long term possibilities for reform of the European Schools and responses to the HE and Vocational Training Memoranda. Finally Ministers will also discuss the Working

Group on HE Quality Assessment, Development of Pilot EC/US cooperation in HE and the proposed European Week for Scientific Culture.

The *Internal Market Council* will meet on 14 June. No Agenda has yet been set for this meeting.

The *Agriculture Council* will meet on 14-15 June. Ministers will discuss the agricultural aspects of the GATT negotiations. They may also discuss the 1993-94 price-fixing proposals; milk quotas (SLOM III); Review of the potato regime; sugar; set-aside; Spanish, Italian and Greek milk quotas; plant breeders' rights and minced meat.

The *Telecommunications Council* will meet on 16 June to discuss HDTV, Telecommunications Liberalisation, Postal Services Green Paper and the Satellite Earth Station Equipment Directive.

The *Fisheries Council* will meet on 24 June. Ministers may discuss the proposed control and enforcement regulation; EC Fisheries Agreement with Argentina; review of the accession arrangements applicable to Spain and Portugal; proposed harmonised technical conservation measures in the Mediterranean and the possible Commission negotiating mandate with the Russian Federation.

The *Energy Council* will meet on 25 June. Ministers will discuss the harmonisation of hydrocarbons licensing regimes, liberalisation of natural gas and electricity markets, coal state aids, nuclear safety and energy supply in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union, and the European Energy Charter. Ministers are expected to adopt the SAVE directive on energy efficiency and the Altener decision on new and renewable energy sources.

The *Environment Council* will meet on 28-29 June. The Council may reach agreement on the directives on hazardous waste incineration, volatile organic compounds (Stage 1), emissions from motor vehicles and the decision on ratification of the Biodiversity Convention. Progress reports may be presented on revisions to the CITES Regulation, follow up to UNCED and proposals for a Carbon/Energy Tax. Discussions may also cover revisions to the Birds Directive, CO_2 emissions from cars and, possibly, implementation of the Montreal Protocol as regards sCFCs and methyl bromide.

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the cost to date and the expected future cost of his Department's market-testing programme; how many staff are engaged full-time in work relating to market testing; which firms of consultants have been used in connection with the market-testing programme; and how they were selected.

Mr. Goodlad: The consultancy costs and the direct staff costs of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office diplomatic wing's market-testing programme up to 31 March 1993 totalled £260,000. The cost for the aid wing was £290,000. In neither case is it possible to estimate the future cost.

Since November 1991, market testing has accounted for a significant proportion of the time of some 35 diplomatic wing, and 14 aid wing staff. The diplomatic wing has employed Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte and Capita Management Consultants on work relating to market testing. The aid wing has employed Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte, KPMG and CSL (Group) Ltd. In all cases, the consutants were originally selected by competitive tender.

Drug Imports

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the involvement of his Department in the effort to reduce illegal imports of drugs.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: One of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's objectives is the promotion of effective international co-operation against drugs, particularly in the context of the 1988 United Nations drugs convention. The FCO department concerned plays an active part in international meetings on drugs, and is engaged in a range of activity to develop bilateral co-operation to reduce drug production and trafficking.

China

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations between the United Kingdom and the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Goodlad: We share with China the joint objective of maintaining the stability and prosperity of Hong Kong. We are also seeking to improve relations across a broad front. As fellow members of the Security Council, we maintain a dialogue on international issues. We would like by increasing our trade to participate in the rapid growth of the Chinese economy. We regularly raise a number of other matters including human rights and Tibet with the Chinese Government.

Nuclear Testing

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) of 15 February, *Official Report*, column 33, if he will place in the Library copies of correspondence arising from the letter from the British embassy in Washington to Senators Hatfield, Exon and Mitchell in August 1992.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The British embassy in Washington received one letter from Senator Hatfield in reply to the letter sent to Senators Hatfield, Exon and Mitchell in August 1992. A decision to make this reply public would have to be for the sender of the letter.

Belize

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what changes he proposes in respect of policy towards Belize following recent developments in Guatemala; and if he will make a statement on policy towards Guatemala.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Our policy towards Belize remains unchanged. As regards the British garrison in Belize, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) on 13 May at column *561*. We are following closely current developments in Guatemala. As we and our European partners made clear in an EC statement on 27 May, we view the current situation in Guatemala with concern, and call for an early return to the democratic process.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to visit Belize to discuss recent political changes in neighbouring Guatemala with the Prime Minister of Belize.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Neither my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs nor I have any plans to visit Belize at present. Our High Commissioner in Belmopan is, of course, in close touch with the Belize authorities, and we look forward to seeing the Belizean Prime Minister in London shortly.

Guatemala

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to meet the ambassador of Guatemala to discuss recent developments in his country.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Neither my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs nor I have any plans to meet the Guatemalan ambassador.

El Salvador

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's relations with El Salvador in the light of recent developments in that country.

Mr. Garel-Jones *[holding answer 27 May 1993]:* We maintain good relations with El Salvador. We continue to work with our EC partners and the United Nations to help bring the peace process there to a full and successful conclusion.

EMPLOYMENT

EC Social Affairs Council

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the EC Social Affairs Council held on 1 June.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I attended the meeting of the Labour and Social Affairs Council on 1 June in Luxembourg.

A number of important issues were discussed. The main debate related to the draft working time directive on which the Council reached political agreement on a common position. We made clear the United Kingdom Government's continued objections to the directive, and our intention to challenge the legal base of the directive, when it is adopted, before the European Court of Justice, on the grounds that it represents a misuse of the health and safety provisions introduced by the Single European Act. In consequence, my right hon. Friend registered his intention to abstain on the directive.

Three major concessions were secured which would allow the United Kingdom to maintain flexibility and freedom of choice for employers and employees, namely:

—the right for individual workers to work more than 48 hours a week if they wish;

—that Sunday working should remain a matter for national law;

—provision to allow company and plant agreements to derogate from the main provisions of the directive.

Exemptions from the scope of the directive were made for work at sea and doctors in training, to add to those previously agreed.

There was further discussion of both the young workers directive and the European works councils directive. No significant progress was made. The United Kingdom reiterated its major objections to both measures on grounds of subsidiarity and substance, reflecting, in the case of the young workers directive, the views expressed by the Scrutiny Committees of both Houses.

A Commission paper on employment, following up the earlier resolution adopted under the United Kingdom presidency, was discussed. We stressed the importance of protecting the international competitiveness of EC businesses if we were to be able to tackle the high and rising levels of unemployment in the Community, and the threat to jobs posed by high non-wage costs and over-regulation. The Council agreed to conclusions stressing the need to tackle the problem of severe unemployment and to seek solutions to it, welcoming the Commission's initiative and pledging its commitment to intensifying efforts in this field.

Other substantive agenda items were settled as follows:

A Recommendation on Access to Training secured political agreement, with the United Kingdom's outstanding concerns met;

A Directive on Safety on Fishing Vessels secured political agreement on a common position. The United Kingdom indicated its intention to abstain;

A Resolution on Flexible Retirement was agreed.

Unemployed

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were registered as unemployed in the London borough of Greenwich at the last count; and what was the figure three years ago.

Miss Widdecombe *[pursuant to the reply, 25 May 1993]:* I apologise for the fact that the figure quoted in the original reply related to the parliamentary constituency of Greenwich rather than the London borough of Greenwich. The correct reply follows.

Unadjusted claimant unemployment in the London borough of Greenwich stood at 16,643 in April 1993, and 8,214 in April 1990.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of unemployed *(a)* men and *(b)* women in each of the London boroughs on 20 May.

Miss Widdecombe: The claimant unemployment figures relating to April 8, which were released on 20 May, can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the level of unemployment for the Barnsley, East constituency on the latest available date.

Miss Widdecombe: In April 1993, on the unadjusted basis, there were 3,892 claimant unemployed people in the Barnsley, East constituency.

Sex Discrimination

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many claims were made to tribunals under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 for each year since 1979; how many separate employers were involved; how many of those claims were successful; and what was the average amount of compensation awarded in each year.

Miss Widdecombe: The details where available are as follows:

Year	*Applications under Sex Discrimination Act 1975*	*Successful applications*	*Median award of compensation* £
1979	277	n/a	n/a
1980	486	n/a	n/a
1981	296	n/a	n/a
1982	406	n/a	n/a

Year	Applications under Sex Discrimination Act 1975	Successful applications	Median award of compensation £
1983	353	n/a	n/a
1984-85	376	n/a	n/a
1985-86	430	39	399
1986-87	612	48	625
1987-88	679	46	792
1988-89	903	78	499
1989-90	1,029	86	1,094
1990-91	1,936	78	1,142
1991-92	2,684	[1]90	[1]1,725
1992-93	4,816	n/a	n/a

[1] provisional

(The information is in financial years for the years after 1983.)

I regret that details of the number of separate employers are not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Job Vacancies

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on the current level of job vacancies in England and Wales.

Miss Widdecombe: On the seasonally adjusted basis unfilled jobcentre vacancies in April 1993 stood at 92,600 in England and 9,300 in Wales, increases of 8·4 per cent. and 4·5 per cent respectively on April a year ago.

Jobcentre vacancies do not represent the total number of vacancies available in the economy.

Earnings

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest figures for the average weekly earnings of full-time *(a)* male and *(b)* female workers.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is published in part A of the 1992 New Earnings Survey, table 1.1. A copy is available in the Library.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest figures for the average hourly earnings of part-time *(a)* male and *(b)* female workers.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is published in part A of the New Earnings Survey, table 20.2. A copy is available in the Library.

Job Seekers

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, further to her answer of 25 May, *Official Report*, column *520*, if she will list the figures for the total number of people seeking work for each quarter since 1985.

Miss Widdecombe: The available quarterly figures for Great Britain have been published in table 1 of the Labour Force Survey Historical Supplement, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Skill Shortages

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when she will next meet representatives of British chambers of commerce to discuss skill shortages.

Miss Widdecombe: At present neither my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State nor I have current plans to meet the Association of British Chambers of Commerce. The Department regularly monitors skill shortages which currently are at a low level.

Training

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of young people entering employment for the first time receive training from their employers.

Miss Widdecombe: The Youth Cohort Study of England and Wales showed that in the spring of 1992 66 per cent. of 16 and 17-year-olds and 83 per cent. of 17 and 18-year-olds in full-time employment received either on or off-the-job training from employers.

Workplace Accidents

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what additional measures she is considering to reduce accidents at the place of work; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for maintaining and improving health and safety standards rests with employers and others concerned at the workplace. The Health and Safety Commission's priorities for promoting improvements in health and safety at work are set out in their plan of work for 1993-94 and beyond, which is expected to be published within the next few weeks.

Departmental Buildings

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the buildings currently owned or rented by her Department, together with *(a)* the estimated value, *(b)* the annual rent and *(c)* the annual maintenance cost of each building in the current financial year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are nearly 2,000 buildings in the Employment Department Group estate. The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Youth Training

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people have been waiting for eight weeks or more for a place on a youth training scheme in the Barnsley, East constituency; and what steps he is taking to ensure that a place is provided for them.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is not available in the form requested.

The records held by Barnsley Careers Service show that in April only six young people had been waiting for a youth training place for over eight weeks. Barnsley/ Doncaster training and enterprise council is continuing to ensure that the Government's guarantee to young people is met and is pursuing individual cases.

Learning for Work

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether participants in the new learning for work scheme who are removed from the claimant count,

remain passported for housing benefit, council tax benefit, income support and free school meals and health benefits if applicable; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Yes.

Redundancy Payments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what has been the cost of statutory redundancy payments in each year since 1987-88; and how many workers have received payments by region;

(2) what has been the cost of statutory redundancy payments in each year since 1987-88; and how many workers have received payments.

Miss Widdecombe: Primary responsibility for the payment of statutory redundancy payments lies with employers. Information is not available on the number or cost of payments made by employers.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State may make payment from the national insurance fund to employees whose employer becomes insolvent or is otherwise unable to pay. The number and cost of such payments for each available year is as follows:

	Number (thousands)	*Expenditure (£ million)*
1987-88	30	34·9
1988-89	25	32·4
1989-90	20	25·7
1990-91	42	67·6
1991-92	96	131·8

Information is not available by region.

New Horizons for Women

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the cost of his predecessor's New Horizons for Women campaign.

Miss Widdecombe: Expenditure on the "New Horizons for Women" campaign in 1992-93 was £176,000. The budget for 1993-94 is £300,000, of which £79,000 has been paid so far.

Service Industry

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current definition of service industry used by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Service industry covers the following divisions of the Standard Industrial Classification 1980:

Division 6: distribution, hotels and catering,
Division 7: transport and communication,
Division 8: banking, finance, insurance, business services and leasing,
Division 9: other services.

Maternity Leave

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what account was taken of the Government's obligations under the Innocenti declaration on breastfeeding in drawing up the Government's policy on the length of maternity leave in the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government considered all relevant factors in bringing forward the Bill's provisions, which will greatly enhance the statutory maternity rights of pregnant employees, regardless of their length of service or hours of work.

ENVIRONMENT

Community Care Housing

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research his Department has conducted into the housing needs of older people; and if he will commission research on overall assessment of community care housing needs at a national level.

Sir George Young: The Department has commissioned Ernst and Young management consultants to carry out an independent study of the housing needs of elderly and disabled people. The study has been completed and a series of reports covering different elements of the programme of research are being prepared, slightly later than was originally expected. Due to the amount of data collected and the complexity of the analysis, it is now proposed to publish a single report later this year which summarises the findings from the individual reports, which will then be made available on request.

The study undertaken by Ernst and Young was an assessment of the overall housing needs of eldely people and did not look separately at needs arising from community care policies. The Government are, nevertheless, keeping a close watch on the way in which community care is being implemented and will consider the need for detailed research at an appropriate time.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has had from foreign Governments and parliamentarians concerning the environmental implications of opening the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield.

Mr. Yeo: The Irish Government have formally responded to the chief inspector of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's public consultation on the proposed draft authorisations for the Sellafield site including THORP. There have also been representations from Scandinavian parliamentarians.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations have been received since November 1992 by Her Majesty's Government from *(a)* the Government, *(b)* citizens and *(c)* non-governmental organisations of the Irish Republic regarding the plans to open the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield.

Mr. Yeo: In total, 83,000 responses were received including a response from the Government of the Irish Republic. A breakdown of the responses as requested by the hon. Member is not available.

Planning Permission

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take to protect sites of importance for nature and landscape conservation from being destroyed prior to applications being made for planning permission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The Government encourage local authorities to adopt appropriate policies in their development plans and to make full use of their powers under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and under planning legislation to protect sites which they recognise as sites of local ecological importance. I am satisfied that measures available to local authorities are sufficient to secure the protection of such sites.

EC Directives

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the percentage rate for implementing European Community directives on the environment by each member state.

Mr. Yeo: The latest available information is set out in the Commission's ninth annual report to the European Parliament, "Commission Monitoring of the Application of Community Law—1991", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Waste Management

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the recommendations made by the Radioactive Waste Management advisory committee on the principle of substitution made available to the Government on October 1992; and if he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, if he will make it his policy to publish the report produced by the radioactive waste management advisory committee on waste reprocessing and storage at Sellafield.

Mr. Yeo: The RWMAC report on waste substitution will be released shortly and a copy placed in the Library.

Council Tax Appeals

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what broad timetable he has now agreed with the Valuation Office agency for resolving the council tax appeals which have already been received.

Mr. Baldry: We are still discussing this matter with the Valuation Office agency and representatives of the valuation tribunals. We are anxious that appeals should be dealt with as quickly as is compatible with the right of taxpayers to have their appeals considered thoroughly and carefully, including where necessary or where they so wish by an independent tribunal.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the average cost of dealing with a council tax appeal in *(a)* 1993-94 and *(b)* 1994-95.

Mr. Baldry: The estimated average cost of dealing with council tax appeals is £112 in 1993-94 and £111 in 1994-95. These estimates include Valuation Office agency and valuation tribunal costs and are based on planning assumptions made at the beginning of the financial year.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, if he will consider an increased use of the private sector in order to speed up the processing of council tax appeals.

Mr. Baldry: I do not consider that this would be appropriate, or would in practice secure faster processing of appeals within available resources.

Housing Associations

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the timetable for Government decision in relation to grant levy available to housing associations for the financial year 1994-95; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Grant rates will be announced in time for the next annual bidding round.

Mr. Horam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he has had from the Housing Corporation about private finance for housing associations; and when he expects to announce the grant rates for next year.

Mr. Baldry: We have received initial advice from the corporation about the grant rate for 1994-95. There are a number of areas on which we have asked the corporation for further information and we are currently awaiting its response. Grant rates will be announced in time for the next annual bidding round.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the advice he has received from the Housing Corporation on grant levy available to housing associations for 1994-95, on private finance, and on other related issues; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: We have no plans to publish the advice we receive from the board of the Housing Corporation.

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each of the 20 largest housing associations the most recent figures for the amount of annual Government grant they receive, the number of houses under their management and the ratio between the two.

Sir George Young: Housing associations provide a wide diversity of accommodation from general family housing to homes for those with special needs. Allocations of housing association grant in any year depend on an individual association's ability to meet priority housing needs cost effectively. The amount of grant received in any year will therefore vary. The allocation figures represent the total grant cost of new schemes which the associations are invited to bring forward for approval during the course of the year. The figures for the 1993-94 allocations for the 20 largest housing associations are as follows:

Housing association	Total housing under management	1993-94 Housing association grant allocation £ million
Notting Hill Housing Trust	9,197	29·59
Merseyside Improved Houses	14,806	9·26
The Royal British Legion	11,993	1·43
Hanover	8,637	9·87
Anchor	22,380	6·95
Sanctuary	11,491	45·21
Peabody	11,819	20·83
Circle Thirty Three	7,053	23·90
Northern Counties	11,168	27·16
The North British	21,947	52·67
North	21,249	19·13
Broomleigh	12,318	0·10
The Guinness Trust	10,335	19·49
The Sutton Housing Trust	14,259	8·43
London & Quadrant Housing Trust	13,628	45·72
Liverpool Housing Trust Ltd.	7,155	4·23
Bradford & Northern	8,336	21·90
Focus	7,524	14·98
Bedfordshire Pilgrims	7,308	5·41
Swale	7,284	1·48

Radioactive Waste Inventory

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), of 19 May *Official Report*, column *179*, if he will set out the reasons for the delay in publishing the 1991 United Kingdom radioactive waste inventory; and what steps will be taken to speed up the publication of the 1992 and 1993 inventories.

Mr. Yeo: The 1991 United Kingdom radioactive waste inventory was produced by Electrowatt Engineering Ltd. under joint contract to the Department of the Environment and UK Nirex Ltd. It contains substantially more data than previous inventories and there were some problems in clearing and verifying this data with the industry. The next inventory, which will show stocks of radioactive waste as at 1 January 1994, will broadly follow this new format and we will be looking to the industry for a quicker response.

Environmental Pollution

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 19 May, *Official Report*, column *181*, on transborder impacts of environmental pollution, if he will set out the multilateral treaties and EC directives containing formal consultation between parties on transfrontier issues to which he refers.

Mr. Yeo: The most significant directives and treaties containing provisions for consultation between parties are:

77/795/EEC—Decision establishing a common procedure for the exchange of information on the quality of surface fresh water.
80/779/EEC—air quality standards for sulphur dioxide and suspended particulates.
82/176/EEC and 84/156/EEC—limit values and quality objectives for mercury discharges.
82/501/EEC and amendments—major accident hazards.
83/153/EEC—limit values and quality objectives for cadmium discharges.
85/203/EEC—air quality standards for nitrogen dioxide.
85/337/EEC—assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment.
88/609/EEC—limitation of emissions of certain pollutants into the air from large combustion plants.
92/72/EEC—air pollution by ozone.
Paris Convention from the Prevention of Marine Pollution from Land-based Sources.
Oslo Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping from Ships and Aircraft (this and the Paris Convention to be replaced by a Co-operation Agreement for the Protection of Coasts and Waters of the North-east Atlantic against Pollution).
Geneva Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution.
Helsinki Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents.
Espoo Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context.

ReChem Incineration Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department is required to reply to the European Commission inquiry over the applicability of EC directive 82/501/EEC to the operation of the toxic waste incinerator by ReChem at Pontypool.

Mr. Yeo: The United Kingdom Government were required to respond within two months of receipt of the letter from the EC Commission which was dated 18 February 1993. Our permanent representative to the EC sent his response on 16 April 1993.

City Challenge

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many, and what percentage of the total number of, city challenge board members are *(a)* business men, *(b)* local councillors and *(c)* representatives of community groups.

Mr. Baldry: Some appointments for the second round city challenge boards have yet to be finalised. From the information currently available, the membership of the 31 city challenge boards will be composed of 152 (29 per cent.) private sector, 143 (27 per cent.) local authority and 145 (27 per cent.) community members. Ninety-one (17 per cent.) will be from other agencies and interested organisations.

Mr.Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many city challenge authorities he has visited.

Mr. Baldry: The 31 city challenge partnerships receive regular visits from their sponsor Ministers as well as Ministers from this Department.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money was *(a)* originally allocated, *(b)* allocated for the first year and *(c)* spent by each city challenge authority in the first year.

Mr. Baldry: Each round 1 city challenge partnership has received a total funding allocation of £7·5 million per annum for five years. Partnerships' expenditure limits were revised as appropriate during 1992-93 in order to offset predicted underspends, as they became known, against opportunities to expedite spend elsewhere. These in-year changes do not affect the overall sum allocated to each partnership, which remains at £37·5 million for the five years.

Final expenditure limits and current best estimates of spend against expenditure limits in 1992-93 for all round 1 city challenge partnerships are as follows:

£ million

Authority	Final City Challenge expenditure limit in 1992-93	Expenditure in 1992-93[1]
Lewisham	7·87	7·82
Tower Hamlets	6·39	6·36
Nottingham	7·65	7·44
Wolverhampton	8·24	8·24
Bradford	7·43	7·42
Dearne Valley	7·10	7·10
Manchester	7·83	7·83
Liverpool	7·50	7·50
Wirral	7·50	7·48
Middlesbrough	7·49	7·48
Newcastle	7·50	7·50

[1] All figures for expenditure in 1992-93 are provisional. Final figures will not be available until after the receipt of authorities' 1992-93 final audited claims.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress of Tower Hamlets' city challenge.

Mr. Baldry: The 1993-94 action plan for the Bethnal Green city challenge in Tower Hamlets is currently before us for consideration. It is expected that a decision will be issued soon.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he had concerning exit strategies for the first round city challenge authorities.

Mr. Baldry: The need for planned exit strategies was highlighted in the guidance given to the first round city challenge authorities on the preparation of their action plans. The development of exit strategies is monitored as part of the annual review.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the meetings that the Local Government Commission has held to discuss its proposals for the review of local government in respect of Derbyshire.

Mr. Baldry: This is a matter for the Local Government Commission.

Council Tax

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the average length of time he expects those council tax banding appeals which have been received to date to take *(a)* to be considered by valuation offices and *(b)* to be determined by valuation appeal tribunals if referred to such a tribunal;

(2) how many of the council tax banding appeals so far received he expects to be determined by the end of *(a)* June, *(b)* September, *(c)* December and *(d)* March 1994.

Mr. Baldry: The length of time taken by listing officers and valuation tribunals to clear appeals will depend on the number ultimately received and the complexity of the appeal caseload. In the light of information about proposals received to date, targets for the clearance of appeals are being discussed with the Valuation Office Agency and valuation tribunals and will be announced in due course.

City Challenge

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his latest discussions on future rounds of city challenge.

Mr. Baldry: City challenge has already been immensely successful in promoting new partnerships and providing a new impetus to urban regeneration. Future rounds of city challenge will be considered in the light of results from the 1991 census and after taking stock of the lessons from the first two competitions.

National Sustainability Strategy

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to invite views from the National Recycling Forum on the United Kingdom national sustainability strategy to be submitted to the UN Commission on Sustainability Development.

Mr. Yeo: The Government are committed to widespread consultation in the preparation of the United Kingdom's national sustainable development plan. We welcome the views of anyone who would like to contribute to this consultation process. As the next stage in the preparation of the United Kingdom's plan, my Department expects shortly to issue a consultation paper and will send this to the National Recycling Forum.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received since the publication of the reports by the Local Government Commission on Cleveland and Durham and Derby.

Mr. Baldry: These reports are the commission's draft proposals on which it has asked for the views of local people. Representations are being made to the commission at this stage.

Land Reclamation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of new development took place on industrial reclaimed land in 1992; what assessment he has made of the effectiveness, in terms of environmental safety, of reclamation of contaminated land; and if he will make a statement on the role played by his Department in support of the Urban Regeneration Agency in recycling former industrial sites.

Mr. Baldry: Information about the amount of land reclaimed for development in the years since 1988 will be available from the 1993 derelict land survey. This survey is currently under way and the results should be available early next year. The Government are aware of the need to ensure that the reclamation of contaminated land is effective and has published guidance on this subject. Further research into the threats to the environment posed by contaminated land and the effectiveness of remedial measures is currently under way. Subject to Parliament's approval, the Urban Regeneration Agency will be set up in

the autumn. It will be for the URA to determine its priorities and initial work programme within the scope of a corporate plan to be agreed with Ministers, but recycling industrial sites is likely to be one of its main objectives.

Pollution, River Thames

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what checks are made and by whom, on pollution in the River Thames; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The National Rivers Authority is responsible for monitoring the quality of the River Thames; the sampling results are available on public registers maintained in the NRA's Thames regional office.

Planning Permission, Ninfield

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a paper outlining the background to, and the reasons for, the revocation order issued by him in respect of the authorisation granted by Wealden district council for the erection of a dwelling at Ninfield, East Sussex.

Mr. Baldry: A copy of the revocation order and associated papers have now been placed in the Library.

Together these give full details of the background to, and reasons for, the Secretary of State's decision to revoke planning permission for the dwelling at Ninfield, East Sussex.

Local Government Commission

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total cost to date of the Local Government Commission.

Mr. Baldry: The total cost of the Local Government Commission to 31 May 1993 has been £2,453,070.

Household Waste

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his proposed timetable for legislation on economic instruments to promote the reduction and recycling of household waste; and what options the Government propose to enact.

Mr. Yeo: We are currently examining the responses to our consultants' reports on economic instruments for waste. In the light of those responses, we are actively considering whether to develop economic instruments to promote the reduction and recycling of waste and, if so, which instruments are likely to be most effective.

Cities Conference

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how his Department was represented at the "Conference on Cities '93" at the international conference centre in Birmingham on 24 to 25 May.

Mr. Baldry: My Department was represented at Cities' 93 on 24 and 25 May. My right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State for the Environment opened the conference, and the then Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities visited on the second day. The Department also exhibited at the event.

Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he received the 13th annual report of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee.

Mr. Yeo: My right hon. and learned Friend received RWMAC's 13th annual report on 10 May.

Planning Guidance

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidelines were issued by local authorities as to the criteria to be used in producing unified development plans; and whether changes to these plans will be required following publication of new criteria in the regional planning guidance note No. 2.

Mr. Baldry: The Government have issued instructions on the production of unitary development plans through the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended by the Planning and Compensation Act 1991, and the Town and Country Planning (Development Plan) Regulations 1991. It has issued guidance on national and regional planning policy through planning policy guidance notes, regional planning guidance notes, minerals planning guidance notes and circulars.

National and regional guidance should be taken into account during the preparation of unitary development plans. When such guidance is updated, it may lead to plan changes.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information is being used for revising the regional planning guidance note No. 2; and when he expects the revised note to be published.

Mr. Baldry: The revised regional policy guidance note 2 will be based on advice received from the standing conference of local planning authorities in Yorkshire and Humberside.

I expect a draft of the revised RPG2 to be published for consultation in spring 1994.

Recycling

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a performance league table of local authorities which have achieved the largest volume of recycling waste products.

Mr. Yeo: My Department has commissioned consultants Coopers and Lybrand to survey the recycling plans of English waste collection authorities. This work, which will be completed shortly, is expected to provide information on recycling rates, as reported in the plans.

Local authorities in England and Wales have also been asked by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy to provide information about recycling rates as part of CIPFA's 1991-92 waste collection and disposal surveys. I understand that the results of these surveys will be published shortly.

I will arrange for both publications to be placed in the Library of the House.

Horticultural Substitutes

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action is being taken to encourage the production of peat-free horticultural substitutes from recycled organic waste.

Mr. Yeo: The Government have commissioned research into the potential markets for waste-based compost and are participating in the development of standards for it. This work is designed to address the main barriers to the use of waste-based compost.

My Department funds a number of projects to encourage composting, including projects run by Friends of the Earth; the Henry Doubleday Research Association; and Wyecycle. We have allocated £15 million in supplementary credit approvals to local authorities in 1993-94, to enable them to set up recycling schemes, including organic waste composting schemes.

The Department of Trade and Industry has given a grant of £409,000 to South West Water, under its DEMOS scheme, to explore the feasibility of co-composting sewage sludge and municipal solid waste.

Tree Planting

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to encourage the use of recycled organic material instead of peat in tree planting programmes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: My Department has funded research by the Forestry Commission into good practices in amenity tree planting; and has supported publication of the resulting advice. Some of this work has indicated that thorough site preparation and post-planting care are often of greater importance for successful tree planting than the use of organic matter of whatever origin, including peat. The Forestry Commission has recently published a manual of good practice for the use of sewage sludge in forestry.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish full details of his Department's assessment of the compliance costs for small businesses in general, and dry cleaning businesses in particular, of commitments undertaken as part of the Montreal agreement on chlorofluorocarbons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: Economic assessments under the Montreal protocol were carried out by the protocol economics options committee in 1989 and 1991. I am placing copies of these reports in the Library of the House.

My Department works closely with the Department of Trade and Industry and the relevant trade associations on this issue. Last year the Department of the Environment commissioned a study of the use of CFCs in the refrigeration and air conditioning industry in the United Kingdom which looked, inter alia, at small businesses. This was the sister study to the Department of Trade and Industry commissioned report on solvent-using industries, including dry cleaning. Copies of both reports are in the Library of the House. Costs to small businesses must be expected to vary widely depending on the solution chosen and the particular circumstances involved.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the Ernst and Young econometric model for local government finance which is being utilised by the Local Government Commission.

Mr. Baldry: The model has been developed by Ernst and Young in consultation with the Local Government Commission. Decisions on publication would be for Ernst and Young or the Commission.

Radon Gas

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what current research is being undertaken into the effects of naturally occurring radon gas on people.

Mr. Sackville: I have been asked to reply.

A comprehensive case-control study of lung cancer incidence in the areas with the highest domestic radon concentrations in the United Kingdom, Devon and Cornwall, is currently being carried out by the Imperial Cancer Research Fund in association with the National Radiological Protection Board. This study is funded jointly by these groups, Government and the Commission of the European Community.

The NRPB is also engaged in several epidemiological studies in collaboration with other Government departments and charities such as the Leukaemia Research Fund and the ICRF. These studies are investigating the effect of radon on the incidence of lung cancer, various other cancers, and leukaemia.

In addition, the Department of Health is funding laboratory research which complements the human studies. These are designed to determine the mutation rate and toxicity in lung tissues.

EC Environment Council

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he plans to put forward at the EC Environment Council meeting in Aarhus on 14 to 16 May.

Mr. Yeo: The Government conducted a substantial publicity campaign on the duty of care on its introduction in April 1992. This was well received and more than a million copies of a free explanatory leaflet, which is still available, were distributed to trade associations and companies. The Department employed MORI to review the effectiveness of this and other publicity campaigns. The results of its survey, carried out in December 1992, showed overall high levels of awareness of information on the duty of care. It was clear that awareness was greater among waste disposers than among waste producers. Subsequently, companies have become more aware of the requirements on inquiry from their waste disposal contractors and local authorities.

SSAs

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what the additional educational needs distribution would have been in the 1993-94 SSAs for each authority if the new census data were incorporated.

Mr. Baldry: The additional education need index for 1993-94 recalculated to include information from the 1991 census is shown in the table.

Distribution of additional education needs index using 1991 census information

Local authority	*Additional education needs index*
Greater London	
City of London	1·143100
Camden	1·378000
Greenwich	1·039200
Hackney	1·735000
Hammersmith and Fulham	1·411050
Islington	1·466450
Kensington and Chelsea	1·343450
Lambeth	1·735300
Lewisham	1·284200
Southwark	1·501950
Tower Hamlets	1·785800
Wandsworth	1·185100
Westminster	1·307150
Barking and Dagenham	0·758000
Barnet	0·814450
Bexley	0·567200
Brent	1·366950
Bromley	0·485150
Croydon	0·806850
Ealing	1·161250
Enfield	0·845050
Haringey	1·484350
Harrow	0·752500
Havering	0·448150
Hillingdon	0·641900
Hounslow	0·894050
Kingston upon Thames	0·545650
Merton	0·785000
Newham	1·514700
Redbridge	0·824300
Richmond upon Thames	0·526000
Sutton	0·567550
Waltham Forest	1·210500
Greater Manchester	
Bolton	0·748100
Bury	0·518700
Manchester	1·362050
Oldham	0·774900
Rochdale	0·801000
Salford	0·883850
Stockport	0·496200
Tameside	0·638150
Trafford	0·613950
Wigan	0·554400
Merseyside	
Knowsley	1·257050
Liverpool	1·227850
Sefton	0·684750
St. Helens	0·604100
Wirral	0·839150
South Yorkshire	
Barnsley	0·620950
Doncaster	0·708050
Rotherham	0·625350
Sheffield	0·783600
Tyne and Wear	
Gateshead	0·817300
Newcastle upon Tyne	0·949900
North Tyneside	0·648200
South Tyneside	0·742850
Sunderland	0·776850
West Midlands	
Birmingham	1·173150
Coventry	0·848600
Dudley	0·536450
Sandwell	0·892550
Solihull	0·541250
Walsall	0·712350
Wolverhampton	0·967200
West Yorkshire	
Bradford	0·996100
Calderdale	0·704400
Kirklees	0·782750
Leeds	0·704550
Wakefield	0·551750
Shire counties	
Avon	0·561150
Bedfordshire	0·635150
Berkshire	0·522200
Buckinghamshire	0·477750
Cambridgeshire	0·488050
Cheshire	0·514800
Cleveland	0·817950
Cornwall	0·473850
Cumbria	0·493850
Derbyshire	0·472300
Devon	0·529250
Dorset	0·492250
Durham	0·595650
East Sussex	0·597850
Essex	0·484700
Gloucestershire	0·449300
Hampshire	0·487600
Hereford and Worcester	0·410500
Hertfordshire	0·461100
Humberside	0·637200
Isle of Wight	0·542150
Kent	0·496400
Lancashire	0·652500
Leicestershire	0·619500
Lincolnshire	0·484800
Norfolk	0·476100
Northamptonshire	0·505850
Northumberland	0·491800
North Yorkshire	0·383400
Nottinghamshire	0·652550
Oxfordshire	0·445150
Shropshire	0·475350
Somerset	0·409000
Staffordshire	0·479300
Suffolk	0·404600
Surrey	0·390250
Warwickshire	0·441550
West Sussex	0·405550
Wiltshire	0·437050
Isles of Scilly	0·360000

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment for what reasons the visitor rights factor was doubled in the other services block distribution in the 1991-92 standard spending assessments.

Mr. Baldry: The decision to double the weight on visitor nights was taken in the light of a large number of representations from local authorities suggesting that the weight of 0·25 of a resident, used in 1990-91, took insufficient account of the costs associated with tourism in such areas as environmental health and street cleaning.

Council House Sales

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council homes were sold by each local authority in the county of Kent since 1 July 1979;

what percentage of the total housing stock the total figure of sales represents in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: A table showing the available information on total council house sales for each English local authority in the period April 1979 to December 1992 was placed in the Library recently. The table also shows sales as a percentage of housing stock.

By the end of 1992 four of the 14 local authorities in Kent had transferred most or all of their stock to a housing association—Sevenoaks (March 1989), Swale (March 1990), Tonbridge and Malling (January 1991), Tunbridge Wells (January 1992). One further authority—Rochester upon Medway—transferred its stock to a private company in July 1990.

Housing Corporation

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the annual running cost of the Housing Corporation.

Mr. Baldry: The amount of grant in aid paid by my Department to the Housing Corporation for net running costs in 1992-93 was nearly £28 million. Expenditure during 1993-94 is expected to total just over £30 million, of which £2 million is for the second phase of the corporation's new information technology strategy.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies have been undertaken by his Department or consultants to his Department on the use of irradiation to treat toxic wastes.

Mr. Yeo: We have not commissioned any studies concerning irradiation treatment of toxic wastes.

Biodiversity Conference

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what contribution Her Majesty's Government made to the conference on biodiversity convened by the United Nations environment programme at Trondheim in Norway on 24 to 27 May.

Mr. Yeo: The United Kingdom participated in three of the five expert panels on biodiversity whose reports were presented at the Trondheim conference. The Government were represented at the conference by an official from my Department, and a number of technical experts from the United Kingdom also attended.

Emissions Data

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what evaluation his Department has made of the use of a geographical information system for providing publicly available data on emissions to air and water as stated in the Environmental Protection Act 1990;

(2) what plans his Department has for the use of geographical information systems to provide detailed publicly available information on changes in local, regional and national environments.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 27 May 1993]:* It is for bodies responsible for collecting environmental information, including the maintenance of statutory registers under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, to consider whether the additional costs of providing geographic information in electronic form are justified.

Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is carrying out preliminary work to assess the costs and benefits of a geographic information system for a range of uses which may also include the statutory registers for which they are responsible.

Environmental Management

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the pilot project established to test the effectiveness of British Standards 7750 on environmental management; and what meetings he, other Ministers or officials of his Department have had with British business to discuss the implementations of BS7750.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

It is for the British Standards Institution to decide whether to amend BS7750 in the light of the recent pilot project for the standard. DTI has had no meetings with industry to discuss the implementation of the standard which is a matter for discussion between industry and the institution. My Department and the Department of the Environment are, however, considering possible accreditation arrangements in relation to BS7750 and the proposed EC regulation on eco-management and audit, and any such arrangements will be the subject of wide consultation with industry.

SCOTLAND

Housing Conditions

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects the full survey of the condition of Scottish housing by Scottish Homes to be published.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Scottish Homes plans to publish the main report of the Scottish house condition survey before the summer recess.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will meet the federation of tenants in Glasgow to discuss the findings of the 1993 house condition survey.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The main survey report on the Scottish house condition survey will be available from Scottish Homes before the summer recess, while publication of a special report covering Glasgow is planned for later this year. The Glasgow Council of Tenants' Associations may wish to consider these reports once they are published and to discuss them with the Glasgow district council.

Mr. Davidson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make additional finance available to public sector landlords who have identified major dampness or condensation problems through the house condition survey;

(2) if he will consider additional help to public sector tenants who are required to live in difficult to heat damp houses.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make additional finance available to those public

sector landlords where the house condition survey has identified major dampness or condensation problems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make additional finance available to public sector landlords who have identified major dampness or condensation problems through the house condition survey;

(2) if he will consider additional help to public sector tenants who live in difficult to heat, damp houses.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Very substantial resources totalling some £900 million have been made available to local authorities, Scottish Homes and new town development corporations for capital investment in housing in 1993-94. Under the new system of local authority housing plans and housing capital programmes launched on 30 April, all authorities have been asked to assess their overall housing needs and draw up strategies and targets for tackling houses subject to condensation and dampness in their areas.

Mr. Davidson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will request Scottish Homes to prioritise part of its annual budget towards assisting landlords and tenants with capital works.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is part of Scottish Homes' aim to ensure that the quality of housing in Scotland is substantially improved. In approving Scottish Homes investment programme for any year, my right hon. Friend agrees the amounts which Scottish Homes will spend on particular priorities. The allocation of funds to specific geographical areas and projects is then a matter for Scottish Homes. Scottish Homes' total investment programme in 1993-94 will be £372·5 million of which £277·8 million will be made directly available for capital works on rented housing owned by housing associations, other approved landlords and Scottish Homes own stock.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will request Scottish Homes to prioritise part of its annual budget towards assisting landlords and tenants with capital works to counter dampness and condensation.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of Scottish Homes' capital budget will be spent in each of the next five years on dampness and condensation; and what plans he has to increase the sums involved.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Scottish Homes is committed to improving the quality of Scotland's housing. In 1993-94 through its record investment programme of £372·5 million Scottish Homes will give particular priority to improving the condition of Scotland's housing stock. Priority will be given to projects which will eliminate or replace housing declared as below tolerable standard, and Scottish Homes will also, through its substantial investment in housing associations, other approved landlords and in its own stock, support improvement works which will help counter and eradicate dampness and condensation.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will meet the Glasgow Council of Tenants' Associations to discuss dampness in the city's housing stock.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have no plans for such a meeting. Investment in council housing to tackle dampness is a matter for Glasgow district council in the light of its own view of priorities within the substantial housing capital allocations made available to the council.

Housing Associations

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will visit Paisley, South constituency to assess the need for further investment in housing associations.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The assessment of individual investment proposals by housing associations is a matter for Scottish Homes and private lenders. In total Scottish Homes allocation of funds to housing association projects throughout Scotland will be about £260 million in 1993-94, a record sum. The hon. Member may wish to pursue his particular constituency interests with Scottish Homes.

Community Alarm Systems

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the percentage of *(a)* sheltered and *(b)* non-sheltered or general needs houses in the (i) district council, (ii) Scottish Homes, (iii) housing association and co-operative, (iv) private rented and (v) owner-occupied sectors which are served by community alarm systems.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The available information on sheltered houses, which covers the installation of community alarms, was published in December 1992 in the statistical bulletin, "Housing Trends in Scotland—Quarter ended 30 June 1992", which is available in the House Library. No additional information on community alarm systems is held centrally.

Council Housing

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many new-build *(a)* sheltered and *(b)* non-sheltered or general needs houses have been built by Scottish district councils in each year since 1974; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on housebuilding by user category is not readily available for the years prior to 1986 and could be extracted only at disproportionate cost. The available information is set out in the table.

Local authority house building in Scotland for the years 1986 to 1992

	Category of need	
Year	*General needs*	*Sheltered housing*[1]
1986	1,192	273
1987	1,068	321
1988	1,249	312
1989	953	330
[2]1990	677	207
[2]1991	567	272
[2]1992	325	186

[1] Includes sheltered wheelchair housing.
[2] Based on incomplete returns.

VAT (Fuel)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had on the impact of VAT on domestic fuel for occupiers of public and private sector properties which are proven to be *(a)* difficult to heat and *(b)* in a colder climate than the British average.

Mr. Stewart: None. The Secretary of State has, however, received a substantial volume of correspondence following the Chancellor's announcement to which substantive replies have been sent.

Functions

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the dinners, receptions or functions hosted by his Department since 1 May together with the purpose and the cost of each, where each was held and who attended; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The information is set out in the table. It would not be appropriate or practical to list each individual who attended these functions. The costs quoted are approximate as the events are recent and, in most cases, final invoices have yet to be submitted.

Dinners, receptions or functions hosted by The Scottish Office since 1 May 1993

1 May

Dinner at Edinburgh Castle in honour of His Excellency President Soares of Portugal and Senhora Soares.

Hosted on behalf of Her Majesty's Government by the Secretary of State for Scotland. The guest list included a cross section of the political, commercial, academic and cultural aspects of Scottish life in addition to the President's official suite. 53 guests with approximate total cost of £3,500. The costs of this event will be met by the Government Hospitality Fund.

6 May

Working dinner at Bute House with the Agriculture Committee of the Bundestag

Hosted by Mr. K. J. MacKenzie, Secretary, The Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department and attended by members of the Bundestag Agricultural Committee, senior officials of The Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department and the German Consul in Scotland.

17 guests with approximate total cost of £560.

7 May

Reception at Stirling Castle for delegates attending the OECD Conference on "Values in Environmental Education".

Hosted by Lord James Douglas-Hamilton MP and attended by delegates to the conference. 100 guests with approximate total cost of £1,500. The cost of this event will be met by the Government Hospitality Fund.

18 May

Reception at Edinburgh Castle for the Legal Affairs and Human Rights Committee of the Council of Europe.

Hosted by the Solicitor General for Scotland and attended by members of the Committee and Consular representatives of the EOCD member states. 90 guests with approximate total cost of £1,000.

21 May

Reception at Edinburgh Castle for delegates attending the Annual Conference of the European Pet Food Manufacturers Association.

Hosted by Allan Stewart MP and attended by the conference delegates.

150 guests with approximate total cost of £1,600.

Drug Abuse

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has recently taken to discourage the abuse and illegal use of the drugs commonly known as "jellies"; what evidence he has received associating such misuse with crime; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The misuse of Temazepam capsules, sometimes referred to as "jellies", is a matter of continuing concern and, at the Government's request, the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs has conducted a detailed examination of the problem. The council has recommended that Temazepam should be rescheduled from schedule 4 to schedule 3 of the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 1985. This would place more stringent controls on the production, storage and distribution of the drug; require doctors to handwrite all prescriptions; and create an offence of unlawful possession. The Government are presently considering the outcome of a wide consultation exercise on the possibility of rescheduling and will reach a decision on the matter shortly.

The Chief Medical Officer at the Scottish Office has had discussions with directors of public health, and action has now been taken in a number of health board areas, for example by the introduction of voluntary bans or restrictions on prescribing and by raising the awareness of doctors of the implications of misuse. It is too early to assess the effects of these local measures.

Drug misuse is closely associated with a wide range of criminal behaviour; and police reports indicate that the misuse of Temazepam is no exception.

Fox Hunting

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what permissions he currently gives for the hunting of foxes on land owned by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: No permissions are currently granted for the hunting of foxes on land owned by my right hon. Friend.

Public Appointments

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to allow the members he appoints to *(a)* health boards, *(b)* health trusts and *(c)* other non-departmental public bodies to choose their own chairperson or vice-chairperson; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I have no plans to change the present arrangements.

MV Braer (Oil Spill)

Mr. Peter Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total cost to the Government of the MV Braer incident; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: Government Departments—notably the Scottish Office and the Department of Transport—have expended considerable sums: additional environmental work by Government in Scotland has already cost of the order of £0·75 million. But it is at present too early to say what the Government's overall expenditure will be.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to meet representatives of the employees of the Forestry Commission to discuss the Commission's future; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: My right hon. Friend has no plans to meet representatives of the employees of the Forestry Commission. He understands that representatives of all the trade unions concerned are being kept informed of matters affecting their interests through meetings with the Director General of the Forestry Commission.

Council House Sales

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list for each housing authority area in Scotland the number of former council houses which were purchased under the right-to-buy provisions which have been repossessed over the last five years;

(2) if he will estimate the number of purchasers of former council houses which were purchased under the right-to-buy provisions who have fallen into arrears over the last five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is not available.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will commission research to establish what proportion of owner-occupiers who purchased their property under the right-to-buy provisions are finding it difficult to meet mortgage and maintenance payments.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Office has commissioned a number of research projects since the right-to-buy legislation was introduced in 1980 and in January this year a research report "The Right to Buy in Scotland" was published. A copy is available in the Library. The report provides information on the effect of the scheme and shows that very few purchasers reported any difficulty meeting their mortgage repayments and that 70 per cent. found it easy. There are no immediate proposals for further research into the right-to-buy scheme.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice is given by his Department to prospective purchasers under the right-to-buy provisions about the financial burdens involved in servicing the loans and maintenance costs involved in home ownership.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Tenants who are considering buying their homes under the right to buy scheme can obtain a copy of the Scottish Office Environment Department's information leaflet "Buy Your Home" from their landlord or directly from the Department. The leaflet explains about the costs of buying and owning and advises tenants to seek advice from a solicitor or local citizens advice bureau if they require further information.

Freight Traffic

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the Government's policy on the recommendation on financial inducements to freight traffic to transfer from roads to ferries, proposed in paragraph 103 of the Scottish Affairs Committee's first report, HC 217, on "Scotland's Transport Links with Europe".

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A large number of United Kingdom ports already fall within the definition of inland waterways and are therefore within the scope of the freight facilities grants scheme. The Government will be responding to the report's recommendations in due course.

Conservation Sites

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if all sites of special scientific interest in Scotland will be designated as special areas for conservation under the EC directive on the conservation of species and habitats (92/43/EEC); and when he expects the designation process to commence.

Sir Hector Monro: No. Only a proportion of sites of special scientific interest will be of Community importance and thus candidates for designation as special areas of conservation within the terms of the directive. The designation process will commence after June 1998 by which date the European Commission and member states must agree the list of sites to be designated.

Piper Alpha

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans the Lord Advocate has to initiate prosecution proceedings against the Occidental Oil Company as a result of the Piper Alpha disaster.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: None. The decision taken by my noble and learned Friend's predecessor that there would be no criminal proceedings in relation to the Piper Alpha disaster was publicly intimated in July 1991 and in consequence, as a matter of law, there cannot now be a prosecution at the instance of the Crown in respect of this matter.

Stornaway-Ullapool Ferry

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the Government intends to seek EC objective funding to help finance the replacement of the Stornaway to Ullapool ferry.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is too early to say what projects might be funded from 1 January 1994 under the new round of the European structural funds, the regulations for which are still under negotiation.

Forestry

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions the interdepartmental working party on the Forestry Commission has met; and on what dates.

Sir Hector Monro: The Forestry Review Group has met twice: on 31 March and on 19 May 1993.

Art Therapy

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many grants the Scottish Office is awarding to Scottish students studying for the postgraduate diploma

in art therapy in *(a)* English higher educational institutions and *(b)* Scottish higher educational institutions.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 27 May 1993]:* The Scottish Office is supporting two Scottish students studying for the postgraduate diploma in art therapy at English higher education institutions in session 1992-93. There is only one similar course at a higher education institution in Scotland. It commenced only in session 1992-93 and the arrangements were finalised too late for it to be considered for an allocation of awards. The position will be reviewed for session 1993-94.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what monitoring he is carrying out of the factors influencing the drop out rate of first-year students on the postgraduate diploma in art therapy run by Edinburgh university settlement's school of art therapy.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 27 May 1993]:* The Scottish Office Education Department does not monitor completion rates on individual courses at higher education institutions in Scotland. The Department recently published research into factors affecting non-completion rates in Scottish Universities and issued guidelines for promoting effective learning in higher education. Together with the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council, the Department maintains a general interest in completion rates across the sector as a whole.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total EC funding available to the Edinburgh university settlement's school of art therapy.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 27 May 1993]:* I understand that Edinburgh University Settlement's school of art therapy is to receive funding of the order of 294,000 ECUs (£230,000) in the three-year period 1991-1993 through the European Community's HORIZON initiative.

Self-build Housing

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of the Scottish housing budget was allocated to self-build housing in percentage and money terms; and what percentage was taken up in the latest year for which figures are available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 27 May 1993]:* Some £900 million is available to local authorities, Scottish Homes and new town development corporations for capital investment in housing in 1993-94. No separate budget for self-build housing is prescribed, and it is a matter for the individual authorities and agencies how to allocate the resources made available to them.

Food Poisoning

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what statistics he has on the number of reported cases of food poisoning in Scotland in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 27 May 1993]:* The numbers of food poisoning cases notified in Scotland in each of the last five years are as follows:

	Number
1988	2,998
1989	3,197
1990	3,024
1991	2,938
1992	[1]3,311

[1] provisional figure

A more detailed analysis of food-borne infection in Scotland, and a commentary on the trends, may be found in part II of the report of the Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food, the Richmond report. published in 1991. The report recommended that the current arrangements for national surveillance co-ordinators should be placed on a more formal basis and that is now in hand.

Deer Killing

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each forest in the Forestry Commission Inverness district for each year from 1990 *(a)* the culling targets for red and roe deer, *(b)* the numbers of red and roe deer actually culled and *(c)* the estimates of the red and roe deer populations.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 17 May 1993]:* The information is as follows:

Predicted and actual numbers of Red and Roe deer culled in Inverness forest district

	Red deer		*Roe deer*	
Forest	*Predicted*	*Actual*	*Predicted*	*Actual*
Year to 31 March 1991				
Culloden	30	34	90	92
Glenmore	47	56	30	57
Inshriach	77	97	95	97
Lael	20	24	5	6
Torrachilty/Black Isle	100	107	15	16
Total	274	318	235	268
Year to 31 March 1992				
Culloden	35	43	90	114
Glenmore	54	61	30	23
Inshriach	77	99	73	97
Lael	22	24	5	7
Torrachilty/Black Isle	110	114	15	19
Total	298	341	213	260

Forest	Red deer		Roe deer	
	Predicted	Actual	Predicted	Actual
Year to 31 March 1993				
Culloden	40	52	90	74
Glenmore	66	51	35	23
Inshriach	77	95	80	73
Lael	20	35	5	5
Torrachilty/Black Isle	120	141	20	15
Total	323	374	230	190

Estimated populations of red and roe deer in Inverness forest district in May each year

Forest	1990		1991		1992	
	Red[1]	Roe	Red[1]	Roe	Red[1]	Roe
Culloden	60	270	80	300	70	300
Glenmore	110	150	100	130	90	130
Inshriach	150	300	150	250	150	200
Lael	20	20	20	20	20	20
Torrachilty/Black Isle	400	170	350	150	300	120
Total	740	910	700	850	630	770

[1]The population of red deer in a forest will vary considerably during the year as the deer move from the open hill to the forest and back again. The numbers in the forest in the winter are likely to be much higher than the above population estimates made in May each year.

Forestry Commission (Privatisation)

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what aspects of the privatisation of the Forestry Commission in respect of *(a)* the ownership of woodlands and *(b)* the regulatory functions of the commission will require primary legislation.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 18 May 1993]:* Ministers have come to no decisions about the effectiveness of the current incentives for forestry investment or the ownership and management of Forestry Commission woodlands, which are the subject of review. Only once they have done so would they consider any consequent requirements for primary legislation.

Scottish Parliamentary Business

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet representatives of the Scottish National party to discuss procedure relating to Scottish parliamentary business; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 20 May 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) on 5 May 1993 at columns *178-79*.

Hearing Aids

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who is responsible for the provision and maintenance of radio hearing aids for *(a)* pre-school children, *(b)* children at school and *(c)* students in further and higher education in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 19 May 1993]:* Where a radio hearing aid is specified as special educational provision in the record of needs of a pre-school child or a child attending a school, it is the duty of a responsible education authority to arrange for the provision and maintenance of such aids.

Boards of management of further education colleges have a duty to ensure that their college provides suitable and efficient further education. They have a power to provide to students such assistance of a financial or other nature as they may consider appropriate. In exercising their functions they must have regard to the requirements of those with learning difficulties. Education authorities' bursary arrangements provide a discretion to provide allowances for students with special educational needs.

Within higher education it is for individual higher education institutions to consider the arrangements necessary to meet the additional learning support needs of such students. Eligible students in higher education may be entitled to disabled students' allowances, including provision for the purchase of specialist equipment as part of their student award.

Bail

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average sentence imposed for breach of the Bail etc. (Scotland) Act 1980, in the sheriff court and the High Court in each of the past five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 27 May 1993]:*

The available information is given in the table:

Persons with a charge proved where the main charge was for the breach of the Bail etc (Scotland) Act 1980

Year	Number of persons by disposal							Average sentence	
	Custody	Community service order	Probation	Fine	Caution/ Admonished	Other	Total	Custodial sentence (days)	Fine (£)
High Court									
1987	2	—	—	—	2	—	4	456	—
1988	5	—	—	—	3	3	11	572	—
1989	5	1	2	—	2	—	10	548	—
1990	8	—	—	—	2	2	12	201	—
1991	4	—	2	1	1	1	9	91	500

Year	Number of persons by disposal							Average sentence	
	Custody	Community service order	Probation	Fine	Caution/ Admonished	Other	Total	Custodial sentence (days)	Fine (£)
Sheriff Court									
1987	401	61	70	650	228	8	1,418	71	120
1988	499	114	108	661	246	16	1,644	79	128
1989	574	119	161	711	235	12	1,812	73	125
1990	534	149	169	677	320	11	1,860	76	127
1991	487	181	213	560	286	10	1,737	78	122

Community Charge

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the number of people in Scotland exempted from payment of the community charge on the grounds of severe mental impairment in each year of its existence.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 25 May 1993]:* For each of the years in question the table shows the numbers of persons in Scotland aged 18 or over recorded on the community charge register as exempt from the community charge by reason of severe mental handicap.

	Number
As at September 1989	10,289
As at July 1990	14,794
As at June 1991	15,866
As at June 1992	17,720

DEFENCE

Allivane Ltd.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 27 October 1992, *Official Report*, column *610*, when the 1988 contract with Allivane Ltd. was signed; for how long ammunition was stored in his Department's facilities for Allivane; when the consignment of ammunition was removed from this Department's storage facilities; and at what facilities the ammunition was stored.

Mr. Aitken: A contract between my Department and Allivane Ltd. for the short-term storage of ammunition was signed on 2 June 1988. The ammunition was stored at the central ammunition depot Longtown for a period of 10 days from 7 June until 16 June 1988.

Mr. John Anderson

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the legal basis of the arrest by his Department's police, of Mr. John Anderson, in Scotland, on 24 April 1990; where and by whom the arrest warrant was issued; if he will place in the Library the findings of the board of inquiry into the subsequent road accident on the A249 near Dettling, during the afternoon of 24 April involving Mr. Anderson; what legal action resulted from the road accident; who covered the costs of the repairs to the respective vehicles involved in the road accident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Mr. John Anderson was arrested by Ministry of Defence Police (MDP) on 24 April 1990 in connection with the giving of a corrupt gift contrary to section 1 of the Prevention of Corruption Act 1906. He was interviewed and subsequently released without charge. The warrant for his arrest was issued by a justice of the peace at Ramsgate magistrates court, Kent. Whilst under arrest the MDP vehicle in which Mr. Anderson was travelling was hit by a private car. There was no board of inquiry into this matter, but a road accident report was undertaken by Kent police who decided that legal action was not appropriate. The MDP vehicle was written off and my Department received £2,000 from the third party insurance of the other vehicle involved which was at fault.

Departmental Buildings

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the buildings currently owned or rented by his Department, together with *(a)* the estimated value, *(b)* the annual rent and *(c)* the annual maintenance cost of each building in the current financial year.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Select Committee Recommendations

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Select Committee recommendations have been made about, and how many accepted by, his Department since April 1989.

Mr. Hanley: Since April 1989, the Defence Select Committee has published 42 reports on matters relating to my Department. These reports, together with the Government responses made to them, are available in the Library of the House; Government responses to the reports have appeared either as command papers, or have been published as special reports by the Defence Select Committee itself. My Department has contributed to the work of other Select Committees as requested; any reports reflecting these contributions are also available in the Library. The "Sessional Information Digest" lists Select Committee reports and provides reference numbers to Government responses up to the start of the current Session. Similar information for the current Session may be found in the House of Commons "Weekly Information Bulletin". Alternatively, Select Committee reports and the Government responses relating to them may be traced through the POLIS data base in the Library.

Cadet Corps

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what financial resources have been devoted by his Department towards the running of the *(a)* Air Training

Cadet Corps, *(b)* Army Cadet Force, *(c)* Combined Cadet Force and *(d)* Sea Cadet Corps in each year since 1988.

Mr. Hanley: Information in the form requested is available only from financial year 1991-92 and is as follows:

£ million

Financial year	*Sea Cadet Corps*[1]	*Army Cadet Force*[2 3]	*Air Training Corps*	*Combined Cadet Force*[2 3]
1991-92	4·0	20·0	25·1	5·8
1992-93	4·8	16·5	27·5	6·5

[1] Excludes the cost of the Harbour Training Ship HMS Bristol (about £1 million).
[2] Includes an element of capital works expenditure.
[3] For 1991-92 Earnings Related National Insurance Contributions for Combined Cadet Force Army personnel are included in the Army Cadet Force figure.

Polaris

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 17 May, *Official Report*, columns *81-82*, if he will explain the differences between his answer and the evidence given to the Defence Committee on the annual operation and maintenance costs of Polaris on 30 January 1985, HC 37 (1984-85), p. 159, Q 935; and what items are included in the figure given in the evidence.

Mr. Hanley: The figures given in the answer of my right hon. Friend the member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton) of 17 May (*Official Report*, columns *81-82*) represent the best available estimate of the average annual operating cost of the Polaris system in the individual years 1991-92 and 1992-93. Figures given to the Defence Select Committee in 1985 are likely to have covered similar items, but were derived from a defence-wide cost-attribution system which is no longer in use. This system was largely reliant on contemporary judgments on the attribution of costs which were refined over time. It would not be possible to carry out a more detailed examination of the basis for the figures given in 1985 without incurring disproportionate cost.

Relocation and Amalgamations

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the sections and organisations within his Department for which there are plans for relocation or amalgamation.

Mr. Hanley: Reorganisation plans have an impact within my Department and throughout the armed forces. It would not be possible to list every section and organisation for which there are plans without disproportionate cost. A number of changes have already been announced and announcements will continue to be made as and when decisions are taken.

Search and Rescue

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what will be the reduction, in square miles, between the European waters area currently covered by a one-hour response time for search and rescue helicopters as illustrated in annex A of "The Future Provision of RAF Search and Rescue Helicopters" and that illustrated in annex B in *(a)* the south-west approaches, St. George's channel Irish sea area, *(b)* southern North sea and Dover straits and *(c)* the North sea area between Peterhead and Flamborough head;

(2) what was the total area in square miles in the United Kingdom search and rescue region outside the standard one-hour response time *(a)* as illustrated in annex A of the defence open government document, "The Future Provision of RAF Search and Rescue Helicopters" and *(b)* as illustrated in annex C of the same document;

(3) how large an area in square miles will be outside the standard one-hour response time within the United Kingdom search and rescue region for search and rescue helicopters as a result of redeploying Sea King flight 202 to RAF Chivenor from RAF Brawdy;

(4) how large an area, in square miles, and how many miles of coastline, his Department calculated would be outside the standard one-hour response time for search and rescue helicopters when considering whether to transfer Sea Kings from RAF Boulmer to RAF Leuchars.

Mr. Hanley: The information required is not readily available within the timescale requested and I will write to the hon. Member shortly.

RAF Equipment

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when results of the RAF equipment supply study will be announced.

Mr. Aitken: In the autumn.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what account is taken of cost effectiveness and value for money in the RAF study into equipment supply.

Mr. Aitken: Cost effectiveness and value for money in defence procurement are central to this study.

Burtonwood Air Base

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for the future use of Burtonwood air base and his Department's surrounding land; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: We are currently considering alternative defence uses for RAF Burtonwood once it is vacated by the United States army later this year and hope to take a decision on the site's future as soon as possible. In parallel we are discussing prospects for the site's development with the local authority should it be declared surplus to defence requirements; in this context a planning application for development of some of the land surrounding the main site has recently been submitted to Warrington borough council.

Bosnia

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what specific steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to provide support on the ground to their commitment of safe havens in Bosnia; what British forces are to be provided in support of this concept; and what rules of engagement they are being given.

Mr. Hanley: Security Council resolution 836 calls on United Nations member states to contribute forces to facilitate the implementation of the safe areas. The United Kingdom is proposing to continue the deployment of 2,100 ground troops serving with UNPROFOR Bosnia-Herzegovina command, which constitutes the largest national contribution to that command. A total of 173 of these troops are based at an airfield adjacent to the town of Tuzla. Tuzla and it surroundings is one of the safe areas designated by Security Council resolution 824. The troops will remain there, structured and equipped as at present. They will continue to operate under rules of engagement issued by the United Nations commander.

Married Quarters

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the availability of housing including married quarters in the Stockport and Glasgow areas; and what is the estimated cost of each area for the location of additional personnel for the new Army personnel centre.

Mr. Hanley: The housing supply in both the Greater Manchester and Glasgow conurbations is adequate to meet the requirement likely to be generated by the Army personnel centre. Although some existing married quarters near to the locations could be used, extra quarters would need to be acquired in each case. Because there are currently fewer married quarters in the Stockport catchment area than in Glasgow, provision of married quarters for an Army personnel centre at Stockport would cost nearly £1,000,000 more than allowed in the investment appraisal for the Glasgow option.

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his estimate of the cost of providing additional parking facilities at Kentigern house for the proposed increase in full-time staff for the new Army personnel centre.

Mr. Hanley: It is not proposed to add to the 96 car parking spaces currently available at Kentigern house; Glasgow has a most efficient public transport system which is the normal method of commuting into the city.

Parachute Regiment

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what disciplinary action has been taken against those members of the Parachute Regiment who were bound over to keep the peace for 18 months in a recent court action arising out of incidents in Coalisland, Co. Tyrone.

Mr. Hanley: The soldiers were brought before the magistrates court for various charges relating to the alleged offences committed in Coalisland. No separate disciplinary action may now be taken against them for the same or substantially the same offences.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the estimated legal costs incurred by his Department in respect of the recent court action against members of the Parachute Regiment arising out of incidents in Coalisland, Co. Tyrone.

Mr. Hanley: The costs of this action will not be determined until solicitors' bills have been received for consideration and approval by the Crown Solicitor's Office, Northern Ireland, on behalf of the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many senior and junior barristers were employed by his Department in the recent court action against members of the Parachute Regiment arising out of incidents in Coalisland, Co. Tyrone.

Mr. Hanley: On legal advice, four leading counsel and four junior counsel were employed to represent the particular interests of the individual soldiers concerned.

Belize

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now review his policy in respect of the proposed withdrawal of British military forces from Belize; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Plans for the evolution of the British military presence in Belize were announced on 13 May. We see no reason to change these plans.

Maralinga Nuclear Test Site

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to meet his Australian counterpart to discuss outstanding matters in regard to United Kingdom obligations to clean up the radioactive contamination at the Maralinga nuclear test site in Australia.

Mr. Hanley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence together with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, plans to meet the Australian Ministers for Foreign Affairs and for Primary Industries and Energy on 17 June 1993 to discuss this subject.

WALES

Forestry Commission

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received on the subject of the future of the Forestry Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend and I have received five written representations on this matter during the last year.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was *(a)* the number of people employed, *(b)* the area owned and *(c)* the amount of timber produced by the Forestry Commission in each year since 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

Forestry Commission in Wales

Year ending 31 March	*Number*[1] *employed*	*Area managed ('000s Hectares)*	*Timber produced ('000s Cubic metres)*
1987	1,700	145	761
1988	1,650	144	753
1989	1,445	143	736
1990	1,410	141	689
1991	1,160	140	626
1992	1,290	139	733

[1] This includes directly employed contractors.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to meet the trade unions of the employees of the Forestry Commission to discuss the commission's future; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has no plans to meet representatives of the employees of the Forestry Commission. I understand that representatives of all the trade unions concerned are being kept informed of matters affecting their interests through meetings with the Director General of the Forestry Commission.

Diseases

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total number of cases of *(a)* TB, *(b)* diphtheria and *(c)* dysentery in Wales for each county in each year since 1979.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The numbers of notifications of tuberculosis and dysentery in each county in Wales in each year since 1979 are given in the following table. There were no notifications of diphtheria during this period.

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	[1]*1992*
Tuberculosis														
Clwyd	48	42	36	41	33	46	39	28	22	19	16	28	30	23
Dyfed	41	47	30	45	36	35	36	44	28	21	20	32	31	32
Gwent	49	56	41	49	42	29	32	34	44	25	33	20	20	29
Gwynedd	42	40	39	34	38	19	27	22	21	33	23	26	6	21
Mid Glamorgan	90	79	80	60	51	71	51	46	45	37	49	22	21	47
Powys	12	14	1	5	5	4	2	6	4	1	3	3	0	1
South Glamorgan	80	68	62	52	50	70	49	46	44	37	37	36	45	35
West Glamorgan	50	44	36	37	44	34	38	23	24	28	28	27	13	12
Dysentery (amoebic and bacillary)														
Clwyd	10	7	7	17	9	28	33	15	9	10	27	10	72	180
Dyfed	8	9	2	5	3	7	2	9	0	10	6	5	316	31
Gwent	3	0	8	5	9	10	38	19	6	31	5	0	78	96
Gwynedd	5	5	9	6	13	20	3	0	12	3	4	2	5	16
Mid Glamorgan	4	10	2	3	7	33	92	178	13	3	4	39	23	110
Powys	0	0	1	1	6	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	4	6
South Glamorgan	9	8	14	6	7	26	464	48	240	25	52	166	472	228
West Glamorgan	2	3	3	5	4	10	4	13	3	8	17	13	2	9

Note:
Tuberculosis data from 1982 may not be strictly comparable with those for earlier years because the system has been designed to enable notifications associated with chemoprophylaxis to be excluded. In the past this could only be done when chemoprophylaxis was identified.

[1] 1992 data are provisional.

Source: Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Incomes

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in Wales over 16 years have an income of less than £75 per week.

Mr. Redwood: The estimated number of full-time employees in Wales at April 1992 with gross weekly earnings below £75 was 3,500.

Electrical Goods

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the percentage of electrical goods manufactured in Wales exported overseas in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The information requested is not available.

Relocation and Amalgamations

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the sections and organisations within his Department for which there are plans for relocation or amalgamation.

Mr. Redwood: I have no such plans at present.

A465

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he is now in a position to give the start date for construction of the Aberdulais to Glynneath section of the A465.

Sir Wyn Roberts: A start to the main works is planned for 1993-94 contingent on the availability of trunk roads programme resources during the year.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the latest total figure for the number of *(a)* fatalities and *(b)* accidents on the A465 between Aberdulais and Glynneath since 1978.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 8 June 1992, column *57-59*, for the number of accidents involving personal injury and the number of deaths resulting from accidents on the stretch of the A465 between Aberdulais, junction with A4109, and Glynneath, junction with B4242, for 1979 to 1990. Figures for 1978 are not readily available. Updated figures for 1991 and provisional figures for 1992 are given in the following table along with totals for the years 1979 to 1992.

	Number of accidents[1]	Number killed
1991	25	3
1992[2]	25	3
1979-1992[2]	263	26

[1]Excluding those where there was no personal injury—for which no information is available.
[2]Provisional.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the fatal accident on the A465 near Resolven on Tuesday 25 May.

Sir Wyn Roberts: A full report on the accident is awaited.

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the cost to date and the expected future cost of his Department's market-testing programme; how many staff are engaged full-time in work relating to market testing; which firms of consultants have been used in connection with the market-testing programme; and how they were selected.

Mr. Redwood: The estimated cost of the Welsh Office market testing programme since November 1991 is £647,000. The future costs of the programme have yet to be determined. There are the equivalent of approximately 7·5 full-time staff engaged on work relating to market testing. Coopers and Lybrand, Touche Ross and Price Waterhouse management consultants have been used in connection with the market testing programme. All three appointments followed competitive tendering exercises.

Trawsfynydd Lake

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will close Trawsfynydd lake to members of the public until a full inquiry has been carried out into the radioactivity of the lake; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Regular monitoring of a range of environmental materials from Trawsfynydd lake is undertaken by the directorate of fisheries research of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. This monitoring indicates that the radioactivity dose to the critical group, that is, people who consume fish from the lake and spend time on the lakeside, is well within internationally recommended safety limits. There would appear to be no reason, therefore, why Nuclear Electric should be advised to close the lake to the public.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the level of radioisotopes in Trawsfynydd lake.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Data on levels of radioisotopes in Trawsfynydd lake are collected in the course of routine monitoring by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Results are presented in the "Aquatic Environment Monitoring Report" published annually by that Department's directorate of fisheries research. The latest issue, No. 34, item 6.10 of which refers to Trawsfynydd, is in the Library of the House.

Bone Cancer

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many incidents of bone cancer there have been in Wales in each of the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The recorded number of cases of cancer of the bone and articular cartilage for persons resident in Wales for the years 1979 to 1988 is given in the following table:

Year	Total
1979	83
1980	65
1981	52
1982	81
1983	85
1984	108
1985	97
1986	100
1987	88
1988	111

Source: Welsh Cancer Registry.

The ninth revision of the International Classification of Diseases, Injuries and Causes of Death (ICD 9) was introduced in 1980. Prior to this date the classification of cancer of the bone and articular cartilage included certain types of cancer excluded in later years' figures.

Radon Gas

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many homes the National Radiological Protection Board has surveyed for radon in each year since 1989 in *(a)* postcode district SA, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* the United Kingdom.

Mr. Redwood: The number of homes surveyed for which results are available are shown in the following table:

Year	Postcode SA	Wales	United Kingdom
1989	110	390	8,200
1990	25	140	3,500
1991	90	430	71,000
1992	7	73	23,000
1993	18	110	31,000

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his best estimate of the number of houses in postal district SA whose occupants are exposed to radon gas in concentrations of *(a)* 0 to 25 becquerels per cubic metre, *(b)* 26 to 50 becquerels per cubic metre, *(c)* 51 to 100 becquerels per cubic metre, *(d)* 101 to 200 becquerels per cubic metre and *(e)* more than 200 becquerels per cubic metre.

Mr. Redwood: The research completed to date does not allow the estimate requested to be prepared.

Car Manufacturing

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of people in Wales directly employed by the car manufacturing industry in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Levels of employment in the car manufacturing industry *(a)* in Wales are given in the following table. Figures are available only for years when a census of employment was carried out and the results prior to 1981 are not comparable with later years.

Employees in employment

September	Motor vehicles and their engines (a)	Motor vehicle bodies, trailers and caravans (b)	Motor vehicle parts (c)
1981	400	800	18,200
1984	600	800	12,600
1987	100	900	13,100
1989	—	1,100	8,800
1991	2,000	1,100	7,400

Source: Employment Department.
(a) Standard Industrial Classification (Revised) 1980 Group 351.
(b) Standard Industrial Classification (Revised) 1980 Group 352.
(c) Standard Industrial Classification (Revised) 1980 Group 353.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Sick and Disabled People

5. **Mr. Ashby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by how much real spending on long-term sick and disabled people has changed since 1979.

Mr. Burt: Expenditure for benefits on long-term sick and disabled people in 1992-93 was nearly £15 billion; nearly treble the 1979 level in real terms.

18. **Mrs. Roe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures his Department has taken to maintain support for disabled people.

Mr. Scott: Since 1979 we have introduced a wide range of improvements, aimed at providing a comprehensive and coherent system of disability benefits. These improvements include the introduction of disability living allowance and disability working allowance in April last year.

By the end of 1992-93 expenditure on benefits for long-term sick and disabled people has risen by 197 per cent. in real terms to £14·9 billion.

Pensioners

10. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of recently retired pensioners income derives from state benefits.

Mr. Hague: We estimate that, in the latest year for which information is available, 36 per cent. of the income of recently retired pensioners was derived from state benefits.

Notes:
1. Source: Family Expenditure Survey.
2. Recently retired pensioners are pensioner units where the head of the unit is aged less than five years above the state pension age.

11. **Dr. Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received about the average value of the capital assets owned by pensioners.

Mr. Lilley: We estimate that on average, between 1979 and 1989, pensioners' income from investments rose by 130 per cent. in real terms to £23·10 a week. Reliable information on the average value of all capital assets held by pensioners is not available, but just over half all pensioners own their own home. In England, the estimated average value of owner-occupied homes of those over 65 is more than £42,000.

12. **Mr. Willetts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of pensioners retiring *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* in the latest year for which figures are available, had incomes from savings; and what was the real average level of savings on each of those two dates.

Information is not available in the form requested because the family expenditure survey does not tell us when people retire. The information in the table is about those who have recently retired—that is, where the head of the unit is aged less than five years over state pension age. The sample size of those one year over state pension age would be too small to be reliable.

Income from savings
Recently retired pensioners

	Percentage of units with investment income		Average amount for those in receipt[1]	
	1979	1989	1979	1989
Pensioner couples	73	87	21·60	41·50
Single pensioners	60	64	12·60	31·50
All pensioner units	68	78	18·20	38·10

[1] £ per week, 1989 prices.

Notes:
1. *Source:* Family Expenditure survey.
2. Recently retired pensioner units are defined as: single woman aged 60 to 64; single men aged 65 to 69; and couples in which the husband is aged 65 to 69.

15. **Mr. Nicholls:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many pensioner households had incomes above the national average in 1979, and in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Hague: The information is in the table:

Number of pensioners above contemporary average income
(Millions of people)

	1979		1988-89	
	BHC	AHC	BHC	AHC
Pensioner couples	0·8	0·9	1·0	1·2
Single pensioners	0·7	0·8	0·7	0·9
All pensioners	1·5	1·8	1·7	2·1

Percentage of pensioners above contemporary average income

	1979		1988-89	
	BHC	AHC	BHC	AHC
Pensioner couples	18	20	20	23
Single pensioners	16	20	15	21
All pensioners	17	20	18	22

Notes:
1. *Source:* Family Expenditure Survey.
2. BHC and AHC denote before and after housing costs respectively.
3. 1988-89 denotes a combined sample from the 1988 and 1989 Family Expenditure Surveys.
4. Figures have been calculated using the methodology used to produce the Households Below Average Income results. They therefore relate to individual pensioners (rather than pensioner units) and assume all members of a household share the same standard of living.

20. **Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has of the total value of an average pensioner's savings, investments and home; and what was the figure in 1979.

Mr. Hague: The information is not available in the form requested. In 1989, the latest date for which information is available, the average weekly investment income received by pensioners was £23·10. This represented an increase of 130 per cent. over the average sum of £10·00 received in 1979. Home ownership among pensioners increased from 40 per cent. to 52 per cent. over the same period, with 94 per cent. of pensioner owner occupiers owning their homes outright.

25. **Mr. Legg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the trend in pensioners' real income since 1979.

Mr. Hague: Since 1979 pensioners' total average net incomes have increased by 30 per cent., or 37 per cent. after payment of housing costs.

Fraud

13. **Mr. Robathan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what further action his Department is taking to reduce fraud.

Mr. Burt: This year an extra £10 million has been allocated to the Benefits Agency to provide additional trained staff in key areas, the development of information technology and further research to help step up the fight against fraud and abuse.

We have also introduced new financial incentives to encourage local authorities to crack down on housing benefit fraud.

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has of the extent of fraud in the social security budget; and what steps he is proposing to take to combat it.

Mr. Hague: Although the full extent of social security fraud is not known, a target of nearly £1 billion fraud savings has been set for 1993-94. The Benefits Agency has been allocated an additional £10 million for each of the next three years to allow the deployment of more investigators and to finance other anti-fraud initiatives. New financial incentives have also been introduced to encourage local authorities to combat housing benefit/council tax benefit fraud.

Benefits

17. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what recent measures his Department has taken to maintain the real level of benefits.

Mr. Burt: From April this year we have maintained the real values of all social security benefits by fully uprating them in line with the movement in prices. Because of our success in keeping inflation down this increase, based on last September's RPI, was over twice as much as it would have been using the current inflation rate of 1·3 per cent.

In addition, the continuing payment of the element previously allowed for payment of the community charge as well as 100 per cent. council tax benefit, provides extra help worth up to £1·64 a week for a single person and £2·90 for a couple. Overall this help is worth around £750 million a year.

State Pension

19. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what recent representations he has had with respect to the future of the state pension.

Mr. Hague: We regularly receive representations about the state pension.

Loans

21. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to review the operation of budgetary and crisis loans.

Mr. Scott: We are carefully considering the operation of the social fund in response to a number of authoritative reports and our own close monitoring of the fund.

Elderly People

22. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures his Department has taken to maintain support for the elderly.

Mr. Hague: Since 1979 we have maintained the real value of the basic retirement pension; improved choice and flexibility in pension provision so that now 67 per cent. of recently retired pensioners have income from occupational pensions; and the extra help above normal upratings made available to pensioners on income-related benefits since 1989 is now worth around £1 billion a year.

21-hour Rule

23. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has had on the 21-hour rule.

Mr. Burt: The 21-hour rule enables unemployed claimants in receipt of income support to follow part-time education courses while continuing their search for work. We have received a number of representations from hon. Members and others over the past few months.

Pensions Harmonisation

24. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many letters he has received over the past 12 months from the general public about the issue of harmonising the ages of pension entitlement for men and women; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: Since the consultation document "Options for Equality in State Pension Age" was published in December 1991, we have received over 4,000 responses

from members of the public. The Government are committed to the equalisation of state pension age. We will announce our proposals in due course.

Social Fund

26. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will extend the rules for eligibility for the social fund to include fares to courts relating to family proceedings.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to do so. Arrangements concerning attendance at legal proceedings are a matter for the court.

Automated Credit Transfer

27. **Mr. Hutton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many representations he has received about his Department's consultations for automated credit transfer.

Mr. Burt: We have recently received a substantial number of representations about automated credit transfer, including letters from right hon. and hon. Members and a number of individuals.

Pension Incomes

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much total pension incomes increased per annum between *(a)* 1974 and 1979 and *(b)* 1979 and 1992.

Mr. Hague: Estimates of pensioners' income for 1974 have not yet been calculated on a basis consistent with those for 1989, the latest year for which data are available. However, our most recent comparable estimates show that annual increases in pensioners' incomes were, on average:
(a) between 1974 and 1979—0·6 per cent. a year; and
(b) between 1979 and 1988—3·3 per cent. a year.

National Insurance

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest estimate of the amount of revenue that would accrue to the Government in the first full year from an increase in employees' national insurance contributions of *(a)* 1 per cent. and *(b)* 2 per cent.

Mr. Hague: The figures are as follows:
(a) £1·8 billion
(b) £3·6 billion

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has as to how many people below the basic rate income tax threshold will pay more national insurance contributions during the 1994-95 financial year as a result of the changes announced in the Budget.

Mr. Hague: It is estimated that in 1994-95 about 500,000 people whose earnings fall below the basic rate income tax threshold will pay slightly more in national insurance contributions.

Pension Schemes

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are *(a)* the total numbers of members, *(b)* the total current estimated liabilities and *(c)* the average liability per member in respect of (i) private sector funded pension schemes and (ii) public sector unfunded pension schemes.

Mr. Hague: The information is not available in the form requested. Membership, and approximate liabilities, of public sector unfunded schemes, and of all funded schemes, including those public sector schemes which are funded, is in the table.

	Active members (millions)	*All members* (millions)	*Estimated liabilities* (£ million)	*Average liability per active member* (£)	*Average liability per member* (£)
Public sector unfunded	2·8	5·2	170,000	60,000	33,000
Private/public sector funded	7·8	14·9	430,000	55,000	29,000
All schemes	10·6	20·1	600,000	57,000	30,000

Source: Government Actuary's Department.

Notes:
(a) Numbers of scheme members are based on 1987 GAD Survey of Occupational Pension Schemes.
(b) Estimates of scheme liabilities are for 1991 and are given at 1991 prices.
(c) Estimates of average liability per scheme member are illustrative and assume that sectoral scheme membership did not change between 1987 and 1991.
(d) Active members are those currently contributing to the scheme. All members includes deferred pensioners and beneficiaries.

Child Support

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security who will be required to pay a fee, and how often, for a maintenance application to the Child Support Agency; how long applicants to the agency will be given to pay the fee; and what is the applicant's fee payable annually to the agency.

Mr. Burt: Both the absent parent and the parent with care of the children will be required to pay £44 each for the annual assessment service, renewable each year. The fee is not payable if they are in receipt of income support, family credit or disability working allowance; they are under 16, or under 19 and in full-time education up to A-level or equivalent; or their income falls below a certain limit. Clients normally have 14 days in which to pay the fee.

DNA Tests

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security who will pay for deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) testing, on a denial of parenthood, in cases where the Child Support Agency applies to the court for such testing.

Mr. Burt: Any parties who make an application to the courts for a declaration of parentage may request that DNA tests be taken, but there is no legal power for them or for the courts to require such tests. Where the Child Support Agency is the applicant it supplies conventional evidence to support its application and does not routinely invite or pay for DNA testing. However, the agency may pay for test fees at the express request of the courts, with the intention of seeking recovery of court costs awarded in its favour.

Relocation and Amalgamations

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the sections and organisations within his Department for which there are plans for relocation or amalgamation.

Mr. Hague: There are no current plans for any significant relocation or amalgamation of sections or organisations within the Department.

Departmental Buildings

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the buildings currerntly owned or rented by his Department, together with *(a)* the estimated value, *(b)* the annual rent and *(c)* the annual maintenance cost of each building in the current financial year,

Mr. Hague: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Sickness Benefit

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in Wales have applied for sickness benefit for each month since January 1992; and if he will indicate the total cost of these benefits.

Mr. Scott: Information is not available in the form requested. Available information about benefit claims is in the table and relates to the Benefits Agency's Wales area directorate; the boundaries of which do not correspond exactly with those of Wales. Expenditure on sickness benefit in Great Britain was estimated to be £315 million in the year 1992-93.

Month	*Sickness and Invalidity benefit claims*
January 1992	9,000
February 1992	8,000
March 1992	8,000
April 1992	7,000
May 1992	6,000
June 1992	7,000
July 1992	8,000
August 1992	7,000
September 1992	8,000
October 1992	8,000
November 1992	8,000
December 1992	7,000
January 1993	8,000
February 1993	7,000
March 1993	8,000
April 1993	7,000

Centenarians

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many men and women are expected to reach the age of 100 years or more in June; what were the figures for *(a)* January 1993, *(b)* January 1979 and *(c)* June 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: The information is in the table:

	Number
June 1993	260
January 1993	264
June 1979	111
January 1979	108

Nigerian Residents

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many residents of Nigeria are currently, to his knowledge, in receipt of either United Kingdom social security, housing or other benefit; and what information he has on their occupations.

Mr. Burt: In December 1991, the latest date for which figures are currently available, 206 people resident in Nigeria were receiving United Kingdom retirement and widows pensions. There are currently six residents of Nigeria in receipt of war pensions. Information on other benefits is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. We have no information about the occupation of these beneficiaries.

EC Citizens

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has as to how many non-British EC citizens claimed board and lodging allowances during the past 12 months; and what cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: There is no board and lodging allowance within the social security system. The Department's records do not show a benefit claimant's nationality so information about the numbers of non-British EC citizens who receive income support and housing benefit is not available.

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many non-British EC citizens have claimed benefits in the United Kingdom during the last 12 months; at what cost and for what purpose; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Separate information on the benefits claimed by non-British EC citizens in Great Britain and the

amounts paid to them is not collected. The information requested is therefore not available. The position in Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he is taking to prevent non-British EC citizens from coming to the United Kingdom for the purpose of claiming board and lodging allowances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Students, pensioners and non-economically active people from member states of the European Community enter the United Kingdom on the condition that they do not become a charge on the social security system. An EC national seeking work in Great Britain may lose the right to income support after six months if he has not found employment and has no reasonable prospect of doing so. The only group of EC citizens and their families who can claim social security without qualification are those who are working or who have worked in the United Kingdom, but if unemployed, they must meet all the restrictions and requirements relating to such benefits. This means that they must generally be both available for and actively seeking work. Subject to this, all EC citizens have the right under European treaties to move freely to another member state.

There is no board and lodging allowance within the social security system. People with a genuine rent liability may get help with their housing costs from housing benefit. The position in Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the cost to date and the expected future cost of his Department's market-testing programme; how many staff are engaged full-time in work relating to market testing; which firms of consultants have been used in connection with the market-testing programme; and how they were selected.

Mr. Hague: The cost to 31 March 1993 has been some £3·2 million and the expected cost for the financial year 1993-94 is broadly estimated at £3·5 million. Currently there are some 150 full-time staff assigned to the market testing programme. The following firms of consultants have been used in connection with the market-testing programme:

Coopers and Lybrand
Kodak
KPMG
Hemsley Miller and Co.
PA Consultancy
PE International
PMMS Consulting
Price Waterhouse
SEMA Consultants
Shreeveport
Symonds Facilities Management
Touche Ross

The above were all selected by competitive tender.

Overpayments

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many of the cases of social security investigation in Lancashire in each year since 1989 resulted in identifying overpayments; and what was the total amount of these overpayments in each of those years.

Mr. Hague: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Sickness Benefit

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many sickness benefit claimants there have been in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Such information as is available is in the table. It is based on a 1 per cent. sample of claimants at a point in time in each year.

(i) Date	*(ii) Sickness Benefit claimants*[1,2]	*(iii) Sickness Benefit beneficiaries*[1]
2 June 1979	488,000	430,000
31 May 1980	450,000	384,000
30 May 1981	410,000	352,000
29 May 1982	469,000	393,000
2 April 1983	408,000	338,000
31 March 1984	247,000	190,000
30 March 1985	225,000	180,000
5 April 1986	237,000	179,000
4 April 1987	187,000	110,000
2 April 1988	228,000	117,000
1 April 1989	266,000	109,000
31 March 1990	309,000	103,000
30 March 1991	372,000	110,000

Notes:

[1] Statutory sick pay introduced from 6 April 1993 for a maximum eight weeks sickness absence in a tax year. From 6 April 1986 statutory sick pay was payable for up to 28 weeks in any one period of incapacity for work.

[2] Includes claimants who are not entitled to sickness benefit, but receive national insurance credits.

Spending

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the change in real terms in social security spending in each year since 1978; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Details of total social security spending from 1978-79 to 1992-93 are in the table.

	Expenditure in £ million		*Percentage change in real terms over previous year*
Years	*Cash*	*1992-93 prices*	*Per cent.*
1978-79	16,602	46,341	—
1979-80	19,616	46,927	1·27
1980-81	23,751	48,017	2·32
1981-82	28,963	53,397	11·21
1982-83	33,000	56,794	6·36
1983-84	36,881	60,666	6·82
1984-85	39,957	62,553	3·11
1985-86	43,502	64,577	3·24
1986-87	46,859	67,393	4·36
1987-88	49,145	66,998	−0·59
1988-89	49,967	63,496	−5·23
1989-90	53,026	63,227	−0·42
1990-91	59,497	65,683	3·89
1991-92	69,048	71,465	8·80
1992-93	78,343	78,343	9·62

Notes:

1. 1992-93 figures are estimated outturn.
2. The real terms decrease over the period 1987-88 to 1989-90 is largely attributable to the fall in unemployment since 1986.

Unemployed Volunteers

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on what date his proposal to relax the availability for work rule for unemployed volunteers will be implemented; and if the concession concerning 48 hours will be extended to unemployed claimants who *(a)* provide a caring service, *(b)* have a part-time job or *(c)* attend a part-time training or education course under the 21-hour rule; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: We hope to introduce an amendment to regulations for implementation during the summer.

Many unemployed people who provide a caring service are not required to be available for work at all. However, we have no plans to extend the proposed concession other than to those who are volunteers.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many attendance allowance claims have *(a)* resulted in an award and *(b)* been rejected, broken down by the type of evidence required, in each month since May 1992 at each disability benefit centre and for the country as a whole.

Mr. Scott: The administration of attendance allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. M. Bichard to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 27 May 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many attendance allowance claims have *(a)* resulted in an award and *(b)* been rejected, broken down by the type of evidence required, in each month since May 1992 at each disability benefit centre and for the country as a whole.

The information has been provided in the form of a table attached and shows the results nationally, by each Disability Benefit Centre and at the unit at Blackpool. The categories of evidence used within the tables are as follows:

01—Claimants self-assessment as on claim form
02—Additional information
03—Factual report (hospital, GP)
04—External Medical Practitioner
05—Visting Officer
06—Visiting Officer plus other
Unknown—Evidence type not recorded

The table includes information on both normal and special rules claims.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report*. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

Annex A: Awards on AA 65+ claims by evidence types, DBC and month

		Type of evidence						
	Total	*01*	*02*	*03*	*04*	*05*	*06*	*Unknown*
May 1992								
AAU-Norcross	90	0	0	0	1	0	0	89
Edinburgh	1,137	161	3	5	663	1	0	304
Newcastle	605	154	2	50	247	0	0	152
Leeds	2,393	789	7	23	1,096	1	1	476
Manchester	985	223	0	59	421	0	0	282
Bootle	994	179	5	122	266	0	2	420
Birmingham	3,149	642	12	20	1,630	0	2	843
Bristol	2,081	1,241	27	75	357	0	0	381
Cardiff	515	77	1	0	165	0	1	271
Wembley	3,338	806	12	174	1,774	0	0	572
Sutton	1,998	235	2	20	1,057	1	1	682
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS (ALL DBCs)	17,285	4,507	71	548	7,677	3	7	4,472
June 1992								
AAU-Norcross	99	1	0	0	3	0	0	95
Edinburgh	3,015	684	2	37	1,761	0	2	529
Newcastle	655	119	0	26	291	0	0	219
Leeds	1,453	360	7	40	456	0	2	588
Manchester	1,019	306	1	123	270	0	0	319
Bootle	1,097	252	19	183	179	0	2	462
Birmingham	3,439	658	12	88	1,834	0	2	845
Bristol	2,033	1,331	45	39	154	0	3	461
Cardiff	1,189	318	24	4	389	0	0	454
Wembley	3,331	1,226	34	149	1,224	0	2	696
Sutton	2,423	289	8	54	1,172	1	2	897
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS (ALL DBCs)	19,753	5,544	152	743	7,733	1	15	5,565
July 1992								
AAU-Norcross	77	0	0	0	0	0	0	77
Edinburgh	2,255	729	1	53	873	0	1	598
Newcastle	881	279	3	35	280	0	0	284
Leeds	3,334	2,080	12	118	467	0	1	656
Manchester	1,799	648	0	253	215	0	0	683
Bootle	1,468	596	29	184	187	0	0	472
Birmingham	3,830	1,311	27	194	1,094	0	0	1,204
Bristol	4,176	2,796	79	523	212	1	0	565

	Total	01	02	03	04	05	06	Unknown
Cardiff	4,234	3,029	133	95	460	1	0	516
Wembley	5,044	3,400	57	162	578	1	1	845
Sutton	4,111	1,794	12	54	811	2	1	1,437
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS (ALL DBCs)	31,209	16,662	353	1,671	5,177	5	4	7,337
August 1992								
AAU-Norcross	125	2	0	1	0	0	0	122
Edinburgh	2,391	1,398	4	200	438	0	0	351
Newcastle	795	246	6	29	262	0	0	252
Leeds	4,512	3,453	19	96	423	3	0	518
Manchester	3,065	902	0	533	367	0	0	1,263
Bootle	3,574	2,520	133	342	261	0	0	318
Birmingham	4,526	2,625	33	724	816	0	0	328
Bristol	5,442	4,259	88	634	319	2	0	140
Cardiff	3,514	2,951	56	264	107	1	0	135
Wembley	5,258	4,004	74	70	373	0	0	737
Sutton	6,185	5,006	8	131	327	1	0	712
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS (ALL DBCs)	39,387	27,366	421	3,024	3,693	7	0	4,876
September 1992								
AAU-Norcross	112	2	0	0	0	0	0	110
Edinburgh	5,472	3,338	2	536	1,293	1	0	302
Newcastle	1,343	441	7	140	552	0	0	203
Leeds	5,969	4,523	19	202	686	0	0	539
Manchester	3,920	2,287	7	501	687	1	0	437
Bootle	3,599	2,370	219	433	299	1	1	276
Birmingham	8,020	5,639	44	819	1,191	0	1	326
Bristol	4,894	3,594	109	556	548	1	2	84
Cardiff	3,779	2,705	30	444	409	0	1	190
Wembley	8,493	6,415	117	145	967	1	1	847
Sutton	10,502	7,976	70	380	955	1	1	1,119
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS (ALL DBCs)	56,103	39,290	624	4,156	7,587	6	7	4,433
October 1992								
AAU-Norcross	106	1	0	0	0	0	0	105
Edinburgh	7,238	4,202	18	1,014	1,542	0	0	462
Newcastle	967	236	3	54	346	0	0	328
Leeds	5,608	3,714	21	267	829	1	1	775
Manchester	3,797	2,151	4	408	910	0	0	324
Bootle	3,382	1,763	183	523	529	3	0	381
Birmingham	10,375	7,116	16	1,074	1,604	0	0	565
Bristol	5,399	3,987	120	642	429	6	10	211
Cardiff	3,097	2,020	5	494	307	1	0	270
Wembley	8,101	5,422	95	210	1,392	0	5	977
Sutton	8,135	5,158	164	218	990	1	1	1,603
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS (ALL DBCs)	56,205	35,770	629	4,904	8,872	12	17	6,001

Type of evidence

	Total	01	02	03	04	05	06	Unknown
November 1992								
AAU-Norcross	116	1	0	1	2	0	0	112
Edinburgh	3,145	1,687	2	449	647	0	0	360
Newcastle	1,221	344	13	186	340	0	0	338
Leeds	3,491	2,373	14	106	411	0	0	587
Manchester	3,113	1,847	8	307	672	0	0	279
Bootle	2,515	1,309	121	370	432	0	0	283
Birmingham	4,542	2,871	16	667	579	0	0	409
Bristol	2,147	1,297	63	536	018	9	11	123
Cardiff	1,224	599	11	241	115	0	3	255
Wembley	5,364	3,405	29	167	986	1	1	775
Sutton	4,546	2,947	103	72	463	0	0	959
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS (ALL DBCs)	31,424	18,680	380	3,102	4,757	10	15	4,480
December 1992								
AAU-Norcross	164	0	0	0	0	0	0	164
Edinburgh	2,572	1,330	1	443	467	0	0	331
Newcastle	1,353	647	5	156	226	0	0	319
Leeds	3,109	2,216	17	76	214	0	0	586

	Total	01	02	03	04	05	06	Unknown
Manchester	1,812	969	4	184	359	0	0	296
Bootle	1,410	598	62	242	297	0	0	211
Birmingham	3,352	1,880	11	693	406	1	0	361
Bristol	2,737	2,047	64	418	67	3	1	137
Cardiff	2,065	1,203	32	[illegible]	80	0	1	284
Wembley	4,864	2,987	28	201	945	1	0	702
Sutton	3,863	2,541	22	79	311	1	0	909
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS (ALL DBCs)	27,301	16,418	246	2,957	3,372	6	2	4,300
January 1993								
[illegible]-Norcross	237	1	1	0	0	0	0	235
[illegible]inburgh	2,986	1,526	2	471	543	1	0	443
Newcastle	908	373	0	106	72	0	0	357
Leeds	3,040	1,885	33	136	384	0	2	600
Manchester	2,220	1,166	4	289	411	1	0	349
Bootle	2,464	1,158	181	420	431	0	0	274
Birmingham	5,284	2,919	37	829	875	0	0	524
Bristol	2,836	1,860	193	534	106	1	1	141
Cardiff	2,123	1,188	64	381	158	0	2	330
Wembley	5,208	3,334	65	379	700	0	3	727
Sutton	8,487	3,827	83	103	425	0	0	1,049
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS (ALL DBCs)	32,793	19,237	663	3,748	4,105	3	8	5,029

Type of evidence

	Total	01	02	03	04	05	06	Unknown
February 1993								
AAU-Norcross	1,510	20	1	5	29	0	0	1,455
Edinburgh	2,706	1,502	6	544	308	0	0	346
Newcastle	885	464	0	92	72	0	0	257
Leeds	2,975	1,878	63	112	398	0	1	523
Manchester	1,820	898	5	350	301	0	0	266
Bootle	2,402	1,307	193	339	337	0	0	226
Birmingham	4,852	2,418	101	935	1,061	0	0	337
Bristol	2,390	1,599	138	441	116	1	0	95
Cardiff	1,399	746	39	298	128	0	0	188
Wembley	4,795	3,107	136	476	700	1	0	375
Sutton	4,828	3,405	140	111	402	0	0	770
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS (ALL DBCs)	30,562	17,344	822	3,703	3,852	2	1	4,838
March 1993								
AAU-Norcross	2,905	50	1	8	54	0	0	2,792
Edinburgh	1,881	1,066	9	567	175	0	0	64
Newcastle	1,017	555	1	166	93	0	0	202
Leeds	3,465	2,334	71	149	491	1	0	419
Manchester	2,425	1,262	5	485	554	0	0	119
Bootle	2,532	1,307	211	485	413	0	0	116
Birmingham	5,879	3,271	140	923	1,496	1	0	48
Bristol	3,277	2,382	232	518	140	0	1	4
Cardiff	1,777	1,193	61	310	142	0	0	21
Wembley	6,749	4,488	222	875	1,155	0	1	8
Sutton	6,569	5,168	225	179	473	1	1	522
Glasgow	1,291	822	5	277	187	0	0	0
TOTALS (ALL DBCs)	39,767	23,898	1,183	4,942	5,423	3	3	4,315
April 1993								
AAU-Norcross	2,346	52	2	12	49	0	1	2,230
Edinburgh	1,466	750	13	463	184	0	0	56
Newcastle	871	486	1	158	58	0	0	168
Leeds	3,226	2,343	59	140	377	0	1	306
Manchester	1,817	929	8	344	385	0	0	151
Bootle	2,089	1,059	166	466	269	0	1	128
Birmingham	5,196	2,843	126	879	1,311	1	0	36
Bristol	2,771	2,044	136	497	89	0	0	5
Cardiff	1,396	961	58	251	102	0	0	24
Wembley	6,351	4,290	195	893	950	2	0	21
Sutton	4,336	2,866	162	272	408	1	0	627
Glasgow	1,194	722	0	235	233	0	0	4

	Total	01	02	03	04	05	06	Unknown
TOTALS (ALL DBCs)	33,059	19,345	926	4,610	4,415	4	3	3,752

Annex B: Refusals on AA 65+ claims by evidence type, DBC and north

	Total	Type of evidence 01	02	03	04	05	06	Unknown
May 1992								
AAU-Norcross	26	1	0	1	1	0	0	23
Edinburgh	297	27	1	4	145	0	0	120
Newcastle	592	0	0	1	8	0	0	583
Leeds	653	258	2	9	372	0	0	12
Manchester	648	171	0	86	382	0	0	9
Bootle	373	61	2	75	157	0	0	78
Birmingham	1,462	335	2	10	1,072	0	0	43
Bristol	316	164	6	33	101	0	0	12
Cardiff	147	29	0	0	109	0	0	9
Wembley	1,394	300	3	123	853	0	1	114
Sutton	585	153	1	11	392	1	0	27
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS (ALL DBCs)	6,493	1,499	17	353	3,592	1	1	1,030
June 1992								
AAU-Norcross	44	1	0	0	0	0	0	43
Edinburgh	1,261	147	2	28	769	0	0	315
Newcastle	423	3	0	0	1	0	0	419
Leeds	449	128	2	28	232	0	0	59
Manchester	560	232	1	169	115	0	0	43
Bootle	342	53	2	109	92	0	2	84
Birmingham	1,189	232	6	37	840	0	0	74
Bristol	311	208	12	25	44	0	1	21
Cardiff	590	295	3	1	240	0	0	51
Wembley	1,035	341	7	107	478	0	2	100
Sutton	798	242	0	24	496	0	0	36
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS (ALL DBCs)	7,002	1,882	35	528	3,307	0	5	1,245
July 1992								
AAU-Norcross	34	2	0	0	0	0	0	32
Edinburgh	796	180	1	33	420	0	0	162
Newcastle	533	4	0	1	5	0	0	523
Leeds	526	273	1	25	165	0	0	62
Manchester	900	351	1	255	178	0	0	115
Bootle	586	256	11	85	148	0	0	86
Birmingham	961	365	5	48	447	0	0	96
Bristol	566	303	14	136	81	0	0	32
Cardiff	2,406	1,869	48	63	391	0	0	35
Wembley	801	435	4	75	223	0	0	64
Sutton	1,320	521	6	49	532	0	0	212
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS (ALL DBCs)	9,429	4,559	91	770	2,590	0	0	1,419

	Total	Type of evidence 01	02	03	04	05	06	Unknown
August 1992								
AAU-Norcross	68	2	0	0	1	0	0	65
Edinburgh	622	244	1	50	227	0	0	100
Newcastle	565	4	0	1	5	0	0	555
Leeds	660	415	1	36	175	0	0	33
Manchester	1,106	222	1	252	281	0	0	350
Bootle	468	295	14	50	69	0	1	39
Birmingham	1,388	772	3	61	372	0	0	180
Bristol	539	289	10	115	73	0	0	52
Cardiff	1,372	1,232	12	34	51	0	0	43
Wembley	446	256	5	14	127	0	0	442
Sutton	1,031	640	3	26	54	1	0	307
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS (ALL DBCs)	8,265	4,371	50	639	1,435	1	1	1,768

	Total	01	02	03	04	05	06	Unknown
September 1992								
AAU-Norcross	64	1	0	0	0	0	0	63
Edinburgh	1,905	760	1	202	713	1	0	228
Newcastle	922	71	0	19	58	0	1	773
Leeds	1,071	478	1	131	348	0	0	113
Manchester	1,231	436	0	88	576	0	0	131
Bootle	959	378	38	252	225	0	0	66
Birmingham	2,675	1,208	8	118	516	0	0	825
Bristol	791	472	19	73	122	1	1	103
Cardiff	1,338	835	5	165	306	0	0	27
Wembley	1,220	689	9	31	506	0	1	44
Sutton	2,288	1,371	14	112	469	0	0	322
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS (ALL DBCs)	14,464	6,639	95	1,191	3,839	2	3	2,695
October 1992								
AAU-Norcross	48	0	0	0	0	0	0	77
Edinburgh	3,194	1,003	0	291	1,028	0	0	872
Newcastle	689	7	0	2	3	0	0	677
Leeds	1,163	310	9	133	383	0	1	677
Manchester	1,113	331	0	64	660	0	0	327
Bootle	912	325	25	245	270	0	0	47
Birmingham	3,529	565	0	48	370	0	0	2,546
Bristol	889	612	54	104	68	2	3	46
Cardiff	1,086	649	1	207	194	0	0	35
Wembley	1,546	546	7	76	833	1	1	82
Sutton	1,406	794	14	67	383	2	0	146
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS (ALL DBCs)	15,575	5,142	110	1,237	4,192	5	3	4,884

	Total	01	02	03	04	05	06	Unknown
November 1992								
AAU-Norcross	36	1	0	0	1	0	0	34
Edinburgh	1,836	764	0	250	565	0	0	257
Newcastle	666	0	0	0	2	0	0	664
Leeds	830	233	1	40	192	0	0	41
Manchester	1,021	354	0	78	548	0	0	27
Bootle	718	240	16	213	222	0	0	1,070
Birmingham	1,711	448	1	[illegible]	153	0	0	27
Bristol	428	280	31	[illegible]	31	6	8	57
Cardiff	428	317	10	78	91	0	0	57
Wembley	949	355	5	61	388	0	0	140
Sutton	719	436	8	31	174	0	0	70
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS (ALL DBCs)	9,468	3,428	72	835	2,367	6	9	2,751
December 1992								
AAU-Norcross	72	1	0	0	0	0	0	71
Edinburgh	1,175	520	0	164	287	0	0	204
Newcastle	526	0	0	0	3	0	0	523
Leeds	772	284	2	35	123	0	0	328
Manchester	561	239	1	56	234	0	0	31
Bootle	431	125	7	101	166	0	0	32
Birmingham	1,436	575	4	61	245	0	0	551
Bristol	443	370	21	34	16	1	1	14
Cardiff	792	545	21	141	536	0	0	32
Wembley	658	240	6	19	275	0	0	118
Sutton	761	427	11	55	129	0	0	149
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS (ALL DBCs)	7,627	3,326	49	666	1,531	1	3	2,053
January 1993								
AAU-Norcross	75	0	0	0	1	0	0	74
Edinburgh	1,441	671	1	214	285	1	0	269
Newcastle	465	0	0	0	0	0	0	465
Leeds	1,114	413	4	99	306	0	0	292
Manchester	968	509	2	144	258	0	0	55
Bootle	747	251	37	163	241	0	0	55
Birmingham	2,174	774	3	118	523	0	1	755
Bristol	583	417	31	76	27	0	0	32
Cardiff	1,043	620	28	186	146	0	0	63

	Total	01	02	03	04	05	06	Unknown
Wembley	760	238	1	72	268	0	0	181
Sutton	1,585	684	11	44	147	0	0	699
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS (ALL DBCs)	10,953	4,577	118	1,116	2,202	1	1	2,940

						Type of evidence		
	Total	01	02	03	04	05	06	Unknown
February 1993								
AAU-Norcross	273	2	1	2	4	0	0	264
Edinburgh	1,279	692	3	222	190	0	0	172
Newcastle	517	62	0	7	10	0	0	438
Leeds	1,094	519	4	102	309	0	0	160
Manchester	1,155	677	1	242	201	0	0	34
Bootle	726	305	42	138	190	0	0	51
Birmingham	1,452	537	6	96	566	0	0	247
Bristol	552	426	34	35	33	0	0	24
Cardiff	903	613	24	100	126	0	0	40
Wembley	696	287	5	72	274	0	0	58
Sutton	1,840	747	12	56	118	0	1	906
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTALS (ALL DBCs)	10,487	4,857	132	1,072	2,021	0	1	2,394
March 1993								
AAU-Norcross	674	4	0	0	2	0	0	668
Edinburgh	758	380	0	230	117	0	0	31
Newcastle	643	424	0	122	69	0	0	28
Leeds	1,540	884	27	151	454	0	3	21
Manchester	1,613	962	0	264	364	1	0	23
Bootle	923	382	43	204	282	0	0	12
Birmingham	2,176	743	12	148	902	0	0	371
Bristol	863	731	25	64	39	0	0	4
Cardiff	1,306	980	38	120	154	0	0	14
Wembley	1,331	688	39	153	432	0	0	19
Sutton	2,278	788	30	40	159	0	0	1,261
Glasgow	1,101	723	0	214	163	0	0	—
TOTALS (ALL DBCs)	14,105	7,689	214	1,710	3,137	0	3	2,452
April 1993								
AAU-Norcross	503	12	0	1	6	0	0	484
Edinburgh	526	221	3	174	103	0	0	25
Newcastle	514	340	0	114	38	0	0	22
Leeds	1,448	975	13	122	322	0	0	16
Manchester	1,203	706	3	190	268	1	0	35
Bootle	725	335	25	177	174	0	1	13
Birmingham	1,960	963	15	112	781	0	0	89
Bristol	783	718	10	31	18	0	0	6
Cardiff	937	765	29	43	92	0	0	8
Wembley	1,373	714	26	176	434	0	0	23
Sutton	1,886	1,259	33	99	238	0	1	256
Glasgow	1,540	833	4	431	265	1	0	—
TOTALS (ALL DBCs)	11,858	7,841	161	1,670	2,739	2	1	977

Medical Boards

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what restrictions apply to a doctor who is a member of one of his Department's medical board panels in respect of giving a medical decision about a patient contrary to that of the medical board.

Mr. Scott: Medical boards are a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. M. Bichard to Mr. Alan Milburn, dated 27 May 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what restrictions apply to a doctor who is a member of one of his Department's medical board panels in respect of giving a medical decision about a patient contrary to that of the medical board.

A doctor who is a member of an Adjudicating Medical Authority (AMA) is there as an independent statutory authority and not as a representative of the Benefits Agency or any other organisation. If the medical board has two doctors, then although one of them is the Chairman, the Chairman does not have a casting vote. If the two doctors

disagree, the case is adjourned and referred to an AMA consisting of three members. The AMA decision will be a majority decision.

Of course, a doctor is not permitted to be a member of an AMA if he is or may be affected directly by that case, or if he has taken any part in such case as a medical practitioner who has regularly attended the customer (Social Security (Adjudication) Regulation 33). In effect doctors are not permitted to sit on a board which involves making decisions on patients they have attended regularly.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Serbian Companies

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths), on 6 May, *Official Report*, column *204*, if he will list the names and trading purposes of the 36 companies connected with Serbia or Montenegro known to his Department.

Mr. Needham: The list of 36 "persons connected with Serbia and Montenegro" referred to in my answers to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South is that attached to the open general supply licence (authorised recipients—Serbia and Montenegro) which came into force on 26 November 1992 and is available in the Library of the House. It is currently being renewed, and I will write separately to both the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent and the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South when the review is complete.

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the reactor or reactors of origin of plutonium exported to Japan from the United Kingdom since 1975.

Mr. Eggar: Since May 1979, the plutonium exported from the United Kingdom to Japan has arisen from the reprocessing of Japanese irradiated fuel by British Nuclear Fuels plc.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade in what ways plutonium from the Wylfa Magnox power station has been disposed of since his answer of 9 March 1983 to the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet), *Official Report*, column *403*.

Mr. Eggar: Since 9 March 1983, arisings from Wylfa power station continue to contribute to the United Kingdom's civil holdings of plutonium under international safeguards. For the latest available data, I refer the hon. Member to the plutonium figures published on 4 February 1993, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House.

OFFER

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he received the annual report of the Office of Electricity Regulation; and when he next plans to meet the Director-General of OFFER.

Mr. Eggar: I received a copy of this report on 21 May 1993. Department of Trade and Industry Ministers meet the Director General of Electricity Supply from time to time.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library the supplements to *(a)* his energy technology support unit's report ETSU-R-72 and *(b)* energy paper 60 on renewable energy.

Mr. Eggar: The supplement to the energy technology support unit's report ETSU-R-72 was placed in the House of Commons Library in January this year.

No supplement to "Energy Paper 60" on renewable energy is planned. However, the Government will publish a fuller renewable energy strategy review document later this year, in the light of the REAG report and the "Coal" White Paper.

Pollutec 93

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assistance his Department will provide to British companies to participate in the Pollutec 93 exhibition in Paris in October.

Mr. Needham: Unfortunately, my Department received no bid for this exhibition in its priorities exercise for the relevant programme year. Therefore, no offer of support could be made under the trade fairs support scheme.

Subsequently, an approach was made to overseas promotions support branch by the Birmingham chamber of industry and commerce asking it to support the event. However, by then the provision for the scheme was fully committed making it impossible to offer assistance.

Naturally, if funds become available at a later date my Department will review the position.

ECGD

Mr. Spellar: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the present staffing level of the Export Credit Guarantees Department; what is the projected level under the draft corporate plan; and what are the terms of reference of the external report commissioned on the ECGD.

Mr. Needham: The total staff employed in ECGD at present is 601. The staffing level projected by the draft corporate plan at April 1997 is 524.

The terms of reference for the external review of ECGD are:

"1. To consider and advise on the appropriate size and nature of the central services, in particular personnel, finance, IT, audit, management review, procurement and facilities management which ECGD needs to support its business effectively, taking account of:

- the constraints under which the Government Departments are required to operate, in particular with regard to Government accounting, and the personnel and other management policies of the Government;
- the current state of, and future strategy for ECGD's IT and other systems;
- its business objectives.

2. To advise on the pace at which any changes should or could be made.

- *(a)* without regard to ECGD's current running cost cash limits;
- *(b)* with a view to containing any additional running cost expenditure within existing running cost limits;

having regard to the ability of ECGD to place any surplus staff in other Government Departments or public sector organisations.

3. To advise on the implementation of any recommendations, having regard to the need to maintain the integrity and viability of ECGD's business operations."

Steel

Mr. Spellar: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement regarding EC policy on steel prices.

Mr. Sainsbury: EC policy on steel prices is governed by the provisions of the ECSC treaty. The pricing decisions of individual EC steel producers are a matter for the companies concerned.

Trams

Mr. Spellar: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps his Department is taking to ensure there is a British capability for manufacturing trams.

Mr. Sainsbury: My Department helps to enhance Britain's capability in light rail transit systems, which includes trams, in a number of ways, including support under the tracked-transport systems technology programme.

Nuclear Safety

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what research his Department has undertaken into public attitudes to the British Nuclear Fuels plc nuclear waste substitution proposal and the storage of foreign nuclear waste in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: The possibility of substitution has been publicly acknowledged by Government since the reply by the then Under-Secretary of State for Energy to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 2 May 1986, *Official Report*, column *500-01*. Although advice has been received from the radioactive waste management advisory committee, the Government's consideration of the proposal by British Nuclear Fuels plc to return nuclear waste by substitution has not yet been completed. If approved, substitution would not lead to any net overseas radioactivity being retained in the United Kingdom.

Inntrepreneur Scheme

Mr. Wareing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what representations he has respecting the inntrepreneur scheme operated by Grand Metropolitan Estates within the brewery industry; what have been the nature of such representations; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will refer the practice of the inntrepreneur scheme operated by Grand Metropolitan Estates within the brewery industry to the Office of Fair Trading.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Both I and my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade have received representations in the form of correspondence from Inntrepreneur Estates Ltd. lessees, or on their behalf. Whilst the terms of individual leases are a commercial matter for discussion between landlord and tenant, Ministers have on a number of occasions urged Grand Metropolitan, as managers of IEL, to deal sympathetically with IEL's tenants where changes were being introduced following the enactment of the Beer Orders or the Courage/Grand Metropolitan transaction. We continue to keep in touch with IEL to ensure that they are aware of the importance we attach to this. The complaints received by the Department do not appear to raise issues under the competition legislation. However, if the hon. Member has any specific examples of anti-competitive practices, it is open to him to raise these with the Director General of Fair Trading.

Recycling

Mr. Robathan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what response has been received from European Commissioners and the German Economics Minister to his concerns over the impact of the German packaging regulations on the United Kingdom recycling industry; and what further action may be taken to alleviate the difficulties being experienced by some sectors.

Mr. Eggar: The European Commission responded on 17 May to my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade's letter about the German packaging regulations. The Commission shared the United Kingdom's concerns, hoped for progress on the proposed directive on packaging and packaging waste as a way of alleviating some aspects of the problem, and referred to a meeting of a group of experts to discuss the general question of packaging waste management on 4 June.

Officials from the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of the Environment visited Bonn for discussions of the German packaging ordinance on 18 May. I hope that it will be possible for the German Economics Minister, Dr. Rexrodt, to respond positively to my right hon. Friend's letter in the light of those discussions.

North Sea Licences

Mr. Page: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the prevalence of legally binding joint application agreements of consortia for North sea licences requiring absolute unanimity among companies for any one consortium to withdraw from a licensing round; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Absolute unanimity was not a requirement among companies applying as a consortium for blocks offered in the 14th offshore licensing round. While no additional partners could be added after the consortium's application had been received, the withdrawal of original members, with the agreement of their partners, has been accepted.

Mr. Page: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) when his Department issued its offer to consortia to withdraw from the 14th round for North sea oil licences following the abolition of petroleum revenue tax relief; and if the offer was sent to all companies involved in consortia;

(2) how many days' notice were given by his Department for consultation between all members of consortia to decide whether to withdraw from their legally binding agreements and applications under the 14th round for North sea oil licences.

Mr. Eggar: A letter was sent on 26 March to the operator company leading each consortium which had applied for blocks offered in the 14th offshore licensing round. This letter was not sent until some two weeks after the proposed changes to petroleum revenue tax were announced in the Budget so that companies had a chance to examine their impact. It afforded companies an opportunity to reconsider their applications, and asked for a response by 2 April. Where companies asked for longer to respond, their request was granted.

Mr. Page: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) how many consortia are involved in bidding for the 14th round of North sea licences;

(2) how many companies, on average, take part in each consortium bidding for a licence for oil extraction in the North sea.

Mr. Eggar: Bids for the 14th offshore round licences were received from 63 consortia of up to five partners, and from 12 sole applicants. The average size of consortium was three companies.

Departmental Buildings

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the buildings currently owned or rented by his Department, together with *(a)* the estimated value, *(b)* the annual rent and *(c)* the annual maintenance cost of each building in the current financial year.

Mr. Eggar: My Department occupies space in 250 buildings, the majority on the common user estate operated by Property Holdings. The information requested on individual buildings cannot be given on grounds of disproportionate cost and commercial sensitivity. Total estimates for the rent and maintenance costs of properties on the common user estate are published in the supply estimates. On DTI's departmental estate, the cost of rent will be about £8·4 million and for maintenance £4·9 million in 1993-94.

Mr. Byers: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the estimated amount to be spent in 1993-94 in rent and other associated costs with the offices of his Department in Victoria street, London.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 27 May 1993]:* My Department's accommodation in Victoria street will cost some £19·7 million in 1993-94, covering rent, maintenance and the contribution in lieu of rates.

Post Offices

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many *(a)* Crown and *(b)* sub post offices are currently used by Her Majesty's Government for payment of the main benefits; and what is the minimum number in each category which he expects to be capable of discharging this function for the next five years.

Mr. McLoughlin: As at 27 December 1992 there were 970 Crown post offices and 18,974 sub-post offices, all of which are used for the payment of benefits. The number of Crown offices is expected to decrease over the next five years in line with the Post Office's policy to convert them to agency offices. The number of sub-post offices is expected to remain broadly similar, although closures occur from time to time as a result of local circumstances.

Oil and Gas Division (Relocation)

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the first civil servants from his Department's oil and gas division to be relocated to Aberdeen will be in place.

Mr. Eggar: The first relocations are planned for the autumn of this year.

Insolvency

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the progress of his consultation on the law of insolvency.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Currently there is no general consultation in progress on insolvency law. Officials in the insolvency service continue to monitor its operation.

Relocation and Amalgamations

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the sections and organisations within his Department for which there are plans for relocation or amalgamation.

Mr. Eggar: The Department plans to relocate part of its petroleum engineering directorate to Aberdeen. We are also considering options for relocating other parts of the Department but as yet we have no firm plans.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Salmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 20 May, *Official Report*, column *289*, if he will publish full details of his Department's study into the use of CFCs as solvents which highlighted a number of implications for the dry cleaning sector of the early phasing out of CFCs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The results of the study, "The Use of CFC 113 and 1, 1, 1 Trichloroethane as Solvents in UK Industry" commissioned by my Department from Touche Ross management consultants, were publicised at a conference hosted by DTI in October 1992 at the national motor cycle museum, Birmingham. Copies of the full report have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses, and are available to the public from the DTI Library and information centre.

Household Waste

Mr. Robathan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions have been held with the packaging industry as to their views on the prospect of increased incineration of household waste; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Officials from the Department of Trade and Industry have had regular discussions with representatives of the packaging industry about various aspects of the disposal of domestic and commercial waste. These discussions will continue and will take into account the findings of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution's report on incineration as a waste disposal option.

Regional Preferential Assistance

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the percentage change in the level of regional preferential assistance by standardised United Kingdom region between 1978-79 and 1992-93.

Mr. Sainsbury: Apart from minor exceptions regional preferential assistance is restricted to the assisted areas of the United Kingdom. Between 1978-79 to 1984-85 the assisted area map was updated three times. With the exception of Northern Ireland there were substantial changes to the coverage of individual standard regions. Changes in the level of regional preferential assistance to individual regions between 1978-79 and 1992-93 are therefore influenced by the difference in coverage.

In 1978-79 two thirds of regional preferential assistance in Great Britain was accounted for by expenditure on regional development grants. RDGs were abolished in 1988 although residual expenditure is still continuing. In 1992-93 expenditure on RDG accounted for less than 10 per cent. of regional preferential assistance in Great Britain.

Percentage change in the level of regional preferential assistance 1978-79 to 1992-93

United Kingdom region	*Percentage change*
Northern	−69
Yorkshire and Humberside	−63
East Midlands	−65
West Midlands	[1] +5,300
South West	−14
North West	−67
Wales	[2] +7
Scotland	[2] −34
Northern Ireland	[2] +6

[1] In 1978-79 the Oswestry TTWA only had assisted area status.
[2] Provisional.

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the cost to date and the expected future cost of his Department's market-testing programme; how many staff are engaged full-time in work relating to market testing; which firms of consultants have been used in connection with the market-testing programme; and how they were selected.

Mr. Eggar: The cost to date of my Department's market-testing programme is some £1,050,000. This covers direct staff costs and consultants brought in to add private sector skills. Future costs cannot be gauged at this time as details of the forward programme are not yet available. Eight staff are engaged full time on market testing.

Firms of consultants which have been used in connection with the market testing programme are: Capita, Coopers and Lybrand, Ernst and Young, Grosvenor consultancy services, KPMG Peat Marwick, Lamb Associates, MM Consulting, PA Consulting, Pannell Kerr Forster Associates, Price Waterhouse, Shreeveport, SRU Ltd., and Stoker Associates. They were all selected by competitive tender.

Fraudulent Trading

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many cases of fraudulent trading have been investigated in each of the last three years; how many of these cases were brought to court; how many were not successful after *(a)* a full trial and *(b)* after dismissal by the judge before the defence case was heard in court; and what was the full cost of each investigation brought to court.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: In 1990-91, 44 cases were referred to my Department for investigation with a view to prosecution for fraudulent trading; of these, 39 have been investigated or are still under investigation; the comparable figures for 1991-92 are 60 and 50, and for 1992-93 are 48 and 28. Nine of the cases where investigation began in 1990-91 have come to trial and convictions were obtained in four of these cases. In three cases, the defendant was found not guilty at the conclusion of the trial and in one case the judge ordered the charges to be left on file. In the remaining case the trial judge directed the jury to return a verdict of not guilty. None of the other cases for all three years has come to trial yet.

It is not possible, within the limit imposed on costs, to provide the information requested on the full cost of each investigation brought to court.

Exporting Countries

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the 10 countries that earned the most money from exports in each year since 1979.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is in the table.

Top Ten Leading Exporters[1] 1979-92

Year		*US$ billion*
	1979	
1	USA	182
2	Germany	172
3	Japan	103
4	France	98
5	United Kingdom	91
6	Italy	72
7	Netherlands	64
8	Saudi Arabia	59
9	Belgium/Luxembourg	56
10	Canada	56
	1980	
1	USA	221
2	Germany	192
3	Japan	130
4	United Kingdom	115
5	France	111
6	Saudi Arabia	102
7	Italy	78
8	Netherlands	74
9	Canada	65
10	Belgium/Luxembourg	64
	1981	
1	USA	234
2	Germany	175
3	Japan	152
4	Saudi Arabia	113
5	United Kingdom	103
6	France	101
7	Italy	76
8	Canada	71
9	Netherlands	68
10	Belgium/Luxembourg	55
	1982	
1	USA	212
2	Germany	175
3	Japan	138
4	United Kingdom	97
5	France	92
6	Saudi Arabia	76
7	Italy	73
8	Canada	68
9	Netherlands	66
10	Belgium/Luxembourg	52
	1983	
1	USA	201
2	Germany	169
3	Japan	147
4	United Kingdom	92
5	France	91
6	Canada	74
7	Italy	73
8	Netherlands	65

	Year	US$ billion
9	Belgium/Luxembourg	52
10	Saudi Arabia	46
	1984	
1	USA	218
2	Germany	171
3	Japan	170
4	United Kingdom	94
5	France	93
6	Canada	85
7	Italy	73
8	Netherlands	66
9	Belgium/Luxembourg	52
10	USSR	41
	1985	
1	USA	213
2	Germany	183
3	Japan	177
4	United Kingdom	102
5	France	97
6	Canada	87
7	Italy	78
8	Netherlands	68
9	Belgium/Luxembourg	54
10	USSR	39
	1986	
1	Germany	242
2	USA	217
3	Japan	211
4	France	119
5	United Kingdom	107
6	Italy	97
7	Canada	87
8	Netherlands	81
9	Belgium/Luxembourg	69
10	Taiwan	40
	1987	
1	Germany	294
2	USA	253
3	Japan	231
4	France	143
5	United Kingdom	130
6	Italy	116
7	Canada	94
8	Netherlands	93
9	Belgium/Luxembourg	83
10	Taiwan	54
	1988	
1	Germany	323
2	USA	320
3	Japan	265
4	France	162
5	United Kingdom	145
6	Italy	128
7	Canada	112
8	Netherlands	103
9	Belgium/Luxembourg	92
10	Hong Kong[2]	63
	1989	
1	USA	364
2	Germany	341
3	Japan	275
4	France	173
5	United Kingdom	153
6	Italy	149
7	Canada	116
8	Netherlands	108
9	Belgium/Luxembourg	100
10	Hong Kong[2]	73
	1990	
1	Germany	398
2	USA	393
3	Japan	287
4	France	210
5	United Kingdom	185
6	Italy	181
7	Netherlands	131
8	Canada	128
9	Belgium/Luxembourg	118
10	Hong Kong[2]	82
	1991	
1	USA	422
2	Germany[3]	403
3	Japan	315
4	France	213
5	United Kingdom	185
6	Italy	176
7	Netherlands	133
8	Canada	127
9	Belgium/Luxembourg	118
10	Hong Kong[2]	99
	1992	
1	USA	447
2	Germany[3]	429
3	Japan	340
4	France	236
5	United Kingdom	191
6	Italy	175
7	Netherlands	140
8	Canada	135
9	Belgium/Luxembourg	123
10	Hong Kong[2]	118

Notes:
[1] Total visible exports.
[2] Includes re-exports.
[3] 1991 onwards includes Eastern Germany.

Source:
OECD Series A.
IMF Direction of Trade.
Gatt Focus.

Marathon Oil

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make public the environmental assessment made by Marathon Oil as part of its bid for blocks in St. George's channel included in the 14th licensing round.

Mr. Eggar: The environmental information provided by applicants for licences is submitted to my Department on a commercially confidential basis, as is the case with all other material supplied in support of applications.

Applicants are required to provide evidence only of their environmental policies. In addition, applicants for sensitive blocks offered in the current licensing round were encouraged to acquaint themselves with the environmental sensitivities of the areas concerned before making their application.

Sea Mammal Research Unit

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to require offshore operators to submit detailed plans of seismic work to the sea mammal research unit for approval before petroleum exploration work can begin.

Mr. Eggar: Where licences are awarded for blocks near to areas of cetacean activity in all or part of the year, operators are asked to consult the sea mammal research

unit before seismic activity commences. They are also asked to use the lowest feasible energy levels for seismic surveys in these areas.

Coal Stocks

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consultations he has held about the level of coal stocks necessary under the Electricity Act 1989 for 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My Department is currently reviewing with the electricity generators, and with the National Grid Company which advises the President in such matters, the basis of the existing directions under sections 34 and 35 of the Electricity Act 1989 with a view to putting in place arrangements which reflects current security needs. The Government will announce in due course any revised arrangements for 1993-94 and subsequent years.

Collieries

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what finance is available to assist in funding consultancy studies for management and employee buyouts of British Coal collieries; how applications for such finance should be made; how many applications have been made; and how many, and of what value, have been successful.

Mr. Eggar: A fund of £1 million is available to assist management and employee buyout teams in meeting the costs of employing consultants and other professional advisers. Assistance will be at a maximum rate of 50 per cent. of the eligible costs, including VAT. Support for work in preparing bids for any one of the pits which British Coal is offering for licensing will not exceed £80,000. Should more than one team bid for a particular pit, the limit will be apportioned equally between the teams.

Applications for such assistance should be made to the coal privatisation unit, room 3.4.21, 1 Palace street, London SW1E 5HE.

Since the scheme was announced on 27 May my Department has received a number of inquiries, however, at this early stage no formal applications have been made.

Sellafield

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if the advisory committee on the safety of nuclear installations will now examine the computer systems at THORP and the Sellafield vitrification plant.

Mr. Eggar: I am advised that the Health and Safety Commission's advisory committee on the safety of nuclear installations has no plans at present to examine these systems which satisfy the requirements of the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received from the advisory committee on the safety of nuclear installations and intermediate-level waste storage at Sellafield.

Mr. Eggar: None. A report by the Health and Safety Commission's advisory committee on the safety of nuclear installations on the accumulation of radioactive waste was published in July 1992.

Coal Imports

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much coal has been imported so far in the current financial year; and how much he expects to be imported in the full year.

Mr. Eggar: Information on the volume of coal imports is published monthly in "Energy Trends", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. Since the completion of the single market at the end of 1992, total imports are having to be estimated while a new system is installed for providing data on imports from and through EC countries the latest available estimate is for March 1993. I have not made an estimate of coal imports for 1993-94.

Fiddlers Ferry Power Station

Mr. Hall: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the projected working life of the Fiddlers Ferry power station.

Mr. Eggar: This is a commercial matter for PowerGen plc.

RECHAR

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will list those local authorities in the Yorkshire region which have received RECHAR money over the past two years giving the amount given to each authority;

(2) what is the value of RECHAR money allocated to the regions over the past two years.

Mr. Sainsbury: Eleven United Kingdom RECHAR programmes which were approved in February 1992 and for which grant has to be committed by 31 December 1993. The allocations to these programmes, in 1992 prices are as follows:

	(millions of ecu)
South Yorkshire	34·0
South Wales	31·2
East Midlands	30·6
Tyne and Wear, South East Northumberland	17·2
Mid Yorkshire	16·5
Eastern Scotland	16·0
Durham and Cleveland	12·2
Lancashire	8·3
South Staffordshire	5·0
North Warwickshire	4·0
Western Scotland	4·0
TOTAL	179·0

It is for each RECHAR programme committee to decide on grants for applications, including those from local authorities. Payments made by the end of May 1993 to local authorities in Yorkshire were, in pounds sterling:

	£
South Yorkshire	
Barnsley MBC	21,000
Doncaster MBC	209,000
Rotherham MBC	423,000
Sheffield MDC	92,000

	£
Mid Yorkshire	
Wakefield MDC	436,000
Kirklees MBC	100,000
TOTAL	1,281,000

Trade (Croatia)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 18 May, *Official Report*, column *123*, when information regarding trade with Croatia was first separately identified from the rest of former Yugoslavia; how permissible trade with Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina was distinguished from prohibited trade with Serbia and Montenegro prior to the collection of separate figures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 27 May 1993]:* United Kingdom trade with Serbia and Montenegro was separately identified from trade with the other former Yugoslav republics in the collection of trade statistics since 1 July 1992. However, in line with normal practice to make major changes to the statistical systems only at the start of a calendar year, separate figures were not published until January 1993. Since then, separate figures have been published for Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro and Macedonia.

Assisted Areas

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he intends to dispatch his Department's new assisted areas map to the European Commission; and when he expects to secure its approval.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 27 May 1993]:* Proposals should be submitted to the European Commission shortly. I cannot anticipate how long they will take to complete their consideration.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the dates being used in the statistical analysis of unemployment that informs his Department's review of the assisted areas.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 27 May 1993]:* As the consultation document made clear, unemployment measures are the major criteria for the review. A number of relevant unemployment statistical series are being taken into account.

Pit Closures

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the current situation at the 12 reprieved collieries; what market testing has been carried out at these collieries; and what is the success of such operations.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 27 May 1993]:* Decisions about individual collieries are a matter for British Coal. I understand the corporation will be maintaining these collieries in production while they carry out market testing. Negotiations for additional tonnages are continuing between British Coal and the generators.

Benefits (Automated Credit Transfer)

Mr. Salmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list each of the organisations which have written to him on the subject of automated credit transfer and the implications for the viability of sub post offices; and if he will indicate which have been *(a)* favourable and *(b)* unfavourable.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 26 May 1993]:* We have recently received a substantial number of representations about automated credit transfer (ACT), including letters from a wide variety of organisations, from right hon. and hon. Members and from a number of individuals. These letters have argued in favour of the continued availability of the option of using post offices for the payment of benefits.

THORP

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will ensure that British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. make available under section 13A of the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 to those involved in the statutory consultation process in relation to the opening of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield the report on the economics of the plant commissioned from Touche Ross.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 26 May 1993]:* Under section 13A of the Radioactive Substances Act 1960, copies of all applications made to the chief inspector of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution are made publicly available, except where material is withheld for reasons of national security and commercial confidentiality. No report by Touche Ross has been submitted to HMIP by British Nuclear Fuels plc as part of an application under the Act. The question of making any such report on the economics of THORP available is a matter for the company.

Car Auctions

Mr. Hardy: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will take steps to require those organising car auctions to keep records of those selling and buying motor vehicles.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 26 May 1993]:* No. The costs of introducing and policing a compulsory system of recording details of buyers and sellers would not represent value for money and would far outweigh any perceived consumer benefits.

Electricity Prices

Mr. Peter Atkinson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the standing charges per quarter and the unit charge in pence/kWh for electricity prices as a weighted average of the 12 regional companies for each year since 1991-92; what each figure represents as a percentage increase or decrease on the previous year's figure; what were the changes in the retail prices index over the same period; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 24 May 1993]:* Average standing charges in England and Wales in £/quarter and unit rates in P/kwh for standard domestic tariffs are tabulated.

	1 April 1991	1 April 1992	1 April 1993
Average Standing Charge (£'s)	10·41	10·55	10·56
Average Unit Rate (pence)	7·55	7·71	7·53
RPI (per cent.)		4·3	1·3

Unit rates increased by 2·1 per cent. in nominal terms from 1 April 1992 but decreased by 2·3 per cent. in nominal terms from 1 April 1993. On the same basis standing charges increased by 1·3 per cent. and 0·1 per cent. respectively over the same periods. These figures exclude discounts associated with payment methods.

The prices charged by RECs, including standing charges and unit charges, are limited by price control formulae, which are overseen by the Director General of Electricity Supply (DGES). Further information is available from the DGES.

Package Travel

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many representations he received objecting to his 1992 proposal to license package travel companies; and from whom.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 25 May 1993]:* A proposal for a licensing system for all organisers of packages was included in the Department of Trade and Industry consultation paper on the implementation of the package travel directive published in July 1991. Of those who responded to this paper, 15 registered a specific objection to a licensing system. These respondents were virtually all representatives of domestic tourist interests.

Telephone Charges

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the local telephone call charges for three minutes at peak times for each member state of the European Community as charged by the principal telephone company or service in each company.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 25 May 1993]:* The call charges for three minute local calls in each of the European Community countries are set out in the table:

Local call charges as at 1 January 1993 (ECU)

Country	Peak rate 3 minutes	Cheap rate 3 minutes
Belgium	0·15	0·15
Denmark	0·16	0·11
Germany	0·12	0·12
Greece	0·03	0·03
France	0·11	0·11
Ireland	0·16	0·16
Italy	0·16	0·16
Luxembourg	0·12	0·12
Netherlands	0·07	0·07
Portugal	0·06	0·06
Spain	0·07	0·07
United Kingdom (British Telecom)	0·25	0·06
Average	0·12	0·10

Source: Commission Communication, "Towards Cost Orientation and the Adjustment of Pricing Structures", updated 1 February 1993.

Note: Due to variations in charge measuring intervals and definitions of "local" calling zones, these data are not strictly comparable.

Rating Revaluation

Mr. Spellar: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimate his Department has made of the likely effect of the 1995 rating revaluation on industry in the west midlands.

Mr. Needham: My Department has carried out no such study, which would in any case be premature.

Leyland-Daf

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what measures he is taking to assist those companies owed moneys by the Leyland-Daf Company; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Outstanding debt is a matter for the suppliers and the receivers.

EC Grants

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of EC grants intended for the United Kingdom has been claimed in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I have been asked to reply.

As EC grants made under the structural funds are allocated on a multiannual basis, no annual figures for grants actually claimed are available. However, of the structural funds allocated to the United Kingdom for the period 1989-93, approximately 80 per cent. have been committed to projects. The remaining 20 per cent. is expected to be committed before the end of the year. Since there is no allocation specific to the United Kingdom in respect of other EC expenditure it is not possible to say what percentage of grants intended for the United Kingdom has been claimed.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he intends to take to ensure that all EC grants intended for the United Kingdom are claimed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I have been asked to reply.

Government Departments give detailed information to interested bodies and individuals on EC grants and moneys which may be available. In the case of structural funds, the DTI monitors commitments and experience on a detailed and regular basis. This gives early warning of the possibility of any allocations not being taken up so that the necessary action can be taken.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 8 June 1993

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Departmental Buildings

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the buildings currently owned or rented by his Department, together with *(a)* the estimated value, *(b)* the annual rent and *(c)* the annual maintenance cost of each building in the current financial year.

The Attorney-General: The Departments for which I am responsible—the legal secretariat to the Law Officers, the Crown Prosecution Service, the Treasury Solicitor's Department and the Serious Fraud Office—occupy accommodation in 148 buildings in England and Wales, all of which form part of the common user estate which is administered by Property Holdings. The Secretary of State for the Environment will include the rent and maintenance costs borne by Property Holdings of this accommodation in his answer to a similar question from the hon. Member. The internal maintenance costs for the accommodation, when borne by Departments, are included with expenditure for other works and the information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

The Crown Prosecution Service rents accommodation directly at only one site, for which the annual rent is £12,000 and the annual maintenance charge is £1,500.

TRANSPORT

Trans-Pennine Crossing

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what considerations he imposed on Transportation Planning Associates, the consultants appointed to carry out the trans-Pennine study, over the use of data gathered as part of the study for purposes beyond the preparation of their report.

Mr. Key: It is my Department's practice that consultants may make use of published reports for their own purposes, but that any unpublished material remains the Department's intellectual property. The Department's permission must be sought before unpublished material is used for consultants' own purposes or made available to outside parties.

Warren Spring Laboratory

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many research contracts he has awarded to Warren Spring Laboratory in the last two years; if he will provide full details of each contract; and what arrangements for research into *(a)* vehicle emissions and *(b)* clean-up technology for oil spillages he envisages on the next 12 months.

The following contracts have been let:

Title	*Date let*	*Duration*
Technical advice on aircraft emissions/air quality	April 1991	1 year
Hazards from residual fuel oils	June 1991	8 months
Clean up of rocky shorelines	October 1991	6 months
Oil thickness measurement	November 1991	3 years
Bulk cargoes: Japanese penetration method	December 1991	3 months
Sampling of operational discharge at sea	January 1992	4 months
Drainage and settlement: Iron ore concentrate—Phase 3	January 1992	4 months
Technical advice on aircraft emissions/air quality	April 1992	1 year
Review of bioremediation techniques	April 1992	9 months
Use of demulsifiers	June 1992	3 years
Fate of chemicals feasibility study	June 1992	6 months
Review of refined products	June 1992	20 months
Dispersion—natural and chemically enhanced	July 1992	6 months
Feasibility study to forecast fuel consumption and exhaust emissions	September 1992	8 months
Eurospill (oil spill model) Extension	September 1992	9 months
Vapour cloud dispersion	October 1992	6 months
Review of sorbents	October 1992	1 year
Drainage and settlement: Iron ore concentrate—Phase 4	October 1992	8 months
Emission tests on catalyst cars	November 1992	2 months
In-situ burning of oil	November 1992	3 months
Inservice performance of oily water separators and bilge monitors	November 1992	3 months
Modelling of sinking chemicals	February 1993	4 months
Assessment of emission abatement (cold conditions)	March 1993	2 years

The Department's plans for future research are set out in our research newsletter for 1993-94, copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Transport Research Laboratory

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the budget of the Transport Research Laboratory in each of the last three years and the current year.

Mr. Key: The Transport Research Laboratory became an executive agency on 1 April 1992, and expenditure information was published in the "Department of Transport Report 1993", Cm 2206. It is repeated in the table for the years in question.

	£ million
1990-91 Outturn	32·6
1991-92 Outturn	35·2
1992-93 Estimated Outturn	38·2
1993-94 Plans	34·1

Maritime Safety

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will support the efforts of the Turkish Government to improve the safety standards of international shipping in the Bosphorus.

Mr. Norris: The Turkish Government put forward an information paper at the last meeting of the maritime safety committee of the International Maritime Organisation, which outlined proposals for improved control of navigation in the Bosphorus. Our policy is to support all sound initiatives for improving the safety of shipping, and we shall offer constructive assistance when the Turkish Government submit formal proposals to the International Maritime Organisation.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has for progressing further the consultation on the channel tunnel rail link, in particular with reference to the Boxley valley.

Mr. Freeman: Union Railways will be arranging special meetings for two sections of the route of Ashford and Detling to Boxley. For each of these sections, more than one route option was identified in Union Railway's report. I am clear that, based on the facts in the report, the route for consultation announced by the Government in March is the right choice. The special meetings will be an opportunity for those concerned about the choice between route options to satisfy themselves on all the facts, and for material factual differences, if any, to be identified and brought to Ministers' attention.

Cash Limits

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what changes he proposes to make to the cash limits and running costs limits for his Department for 1993-94.

Mr. MacGregor: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary revised estimate, the cash limit for class VI, vote 5 will be reduced by £5,801,000 from £495,744,000 to £489,943,000. This reduction will be offset by a corresponding increase on the Department of Transport/local authority capital non-voted cash limit from £451,334,000 to £457,135,000 to enable the Greater Manchester passenger transport executive to repay public transport facilities grant following the receipt of European regional development fund grant and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Railway Rolling Stock

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will show the number of *(a)* locomotives, *(b)* high-speed trains and *(c)* coaching vehicles owned by British Rail in 1979 and 1992.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is as follows:

	1979	*1992*
Locomotives		
Diesel	3,261	1,634
Electric	310	262
High speed trains (power units)	136	197
Coaching vehicles	20,963	12,925

Source: British Railways Board Annual Report and Accounts 1979 and 1991-92.

Marine Oil Spills

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the time of call and country of destination of radio communication calls from the MV Braer via Wick Radio, Shetland Radio or Collafirth Radio between 8 am on 4 January and 5 am on 5 January.

Mr. Norris: None.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will detail the steps taken by his Department and the marine pollution control unit in response to recommendations 74 and 75 in the eighth report of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution regarding the use of dispersants to deal with oil spills; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: I refer the hon. Member to pollution paper No. 20 of 1983, which sets out the Government response to the royal commission report. Since its publication, the MPCU has considerably increased its capacity for dealing with oil spills and, with its contractor Air Atlantique and with Warren Spring Laboratory, has developed considerable expertise in the use of aerial spraying of dispersants and aerial surveillance. In addition, the MPCU has four ship-based oil recovery systems ready to deploy in vessels of opportunity and stockpiles of booms, skimmers and other recovery and clean-up equipment. Details of the arrangements for dealing with pollution arising from spillages of oil from ships into the marine environment are set out in the marine pollution control unit's national contingency plan. This was revised in May 1993 and copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Ethnic Minorities (Employment)

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those organisations which have made representations to him regarding proposed cuts in funding under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In addition to letters from, or on behalf of, staff, governors or parents from schools and other educational institutions, written observations have been received from the following:

Age Concern
Association of County Councils
Association of LEA Advisory Officers for Multicultural Education
Association of London Authorities
Association of Metropolitan Authorities
Association of Teachers and Lecturers
County of Avon

Bedfordshire County Council
Berkshire County Council
Birmingham City Council
Blackburn Racial Equality Council

Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council
London Borough of Brent
Bristol City Council
Buckinghamshire County Council
Burnley and Pendle Racial Equality Council
Burnley Borough Council
Burton-on-Trent Pakistani Welfare Association
Bury Metropolitan Borough Council

Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council
Cambridgeshire County Council
London Borough of Camden
Cleveland County Council
Coventry City Council
Coventry Racial Equality Council
London Borough of Croydon

Derbyshire County Council
Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council

London Borough of Ealing
East Sussex County Council
London Borough of Enfield
Enfield Racial Equality Council

Free Church Federal Council

Gloucester City Council
Gosford Asian Group
London Borough of Greenwich

London Borough of Hackney
London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham
Hampshire County Council
London Borough of Harrow
Harrow Council for Racial Justice
Hemel Hemstead Muslim Welfare Association
Hereford and Worcester County Council
London Borough of Hillingdon
London Borough of Hounslow
Humberside County Council

London Borough of Islington

Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
Kensington and Chelsea Teachers Association
Kent County Council
Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council

Lancashire County Council
Leeds City Council
Leicester City Council
Leicestershire County Council
Leicestershire Gujerati Hindu Association
The Library Association
Lincolnshire County Council
London Boroughs Association
London Borough of Lewisham
London Boroughs Grants Unit

Manchester City Council
London Borough of Merton
Merton African Caribbean Association
Middlesbrough Borough Council

National Association of Headteachers
National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers
National Union of Teachers
Newcastle Upon Tyne City Council
London Borough of Newham
Newham Bengali National Association
Northamptonshire Race Relations Advisory Council
North Staffordshire Racial Equality Council
Northern Race Relations Advisers Group
Norwich City Council

Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council

Preston Borough Council

Professional Association of Teachers

Reading Bangladeshi Association
Refugee Council
London Borough of Redbridge
Redditch Borough Council
Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council
Rossendale Borough Council
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Scunthorpe Borough Council
Secondary Heads Association
Sheffield City Council
Slough Borough Council
South Glamorgan County Council
London Borough of Southwark
Southwark Diocesan Board of Education
Staffordshire County Council
Staffordshire Federation of Mosques
Staffordshire Pakistani Welfare Association
Stevenage Chinese Class Association
Stevenage Gujerati Hindu Association
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
Suffolk County Council
Sunderland City Council
Sussex Racial Equality Council
London Borough of Sutton

Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council
London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council

Union of Buckinghamshire Racial Equality Councils

Warwickshire County Council
Watford Afro Caribbean Association
Watford Borough Council
Welwyn Garden City Islamic Society
West Midlands Fire Service
Westminister City Council
West Sussex County Council
Wimbledon Mosque
Worcester Racial Equality Council

Prison Escort Services

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners in the Humberside and East Midlands region escaped from *(a)* prison service escort and *(b)* police service escort in each of the last five years; and from what type of escorting vehicle the escapes were made.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 4 June 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your Parliamentary Question asking how many prisoners in the Humberside and East Midlands region escaped from *(a)* Prison Service escort and *(b)* Police Service escort in each of the last five years; and from what type of escorting vehicle the escapes were made.

Prison Service

The information requested is available centrally only for prisoners who escaped since 20 June 1988 from Prison Service escorts.

The following figures are for all escapes from escort including those to court, hospital and for other purposes.

	Inmates
[1]1988	1
1989	10
1990	11
1991	22
1992	19
TOTAL	63

[1] From 20 June 1988.

Of these escapers—detailed below are the number who escaped from vehicles:
1988
Nil from vehicles
1989
4 escaped from minibus
1990
2 escaped from minibus
3 escaped from coach
1991
1 escaped from minibus
8 escaped from coach
1 escaped from cellular vehicle
1992
2 escaped from taxi
2 escaped from minibus
3 escaped from coach
Total 26

I regret that information is not available centrally on escapes from escorts staffed by police. This information could only be gathered at disproportionate cost.

Fires Safety

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to discharge the requirements of the EC directives commonly known as the framework and workplace directives; what assessment he has made of the benefit of an extended and replacement designating order by virtue of section 1(2) (f) of the Fire Precautions Act 1971 for places of work, compared to making regulations under section 12 of the 1971 Act.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The health and non-fire safety requirements of the framework and workplace directives have been implemented by regulations made by my right hon. Friend. the Secretary of State for Employment. As to implementing the fire safety requirements, I would refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave him on 7 June, *Official Report*, column *68*.

Consideration was given at the outset to implementing those requirements by making a designation order under section 1 of the Fire Precautions Act. We concluded, however, that such action would place unacceptably high burdens on employers and fire authorities. The use of regulations should, in our view, be less onerous and enable fire authorities to concentrate their resources on high-risk promises instead of having to inspect all workplaces, regardless of risk.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans he has to change *(a)* the £1,000 lower limit, *(b)* the treatment of compensation payments as capital for benefit purposes and *(c)* the conduct and character of the victim rule as part of his review of the criminal injuries compensation scheme;

(2) when he expects to publish his review of the criminal injuries compensation scheme.

Mr. Maclean: The criminal injuries compensation scheme is not being reviewed. In his reply to a question from my right hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) on 23 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *457*, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) announced that the Government intended to replace the present criminal injuries compensation scheme with a tariff scheme next year to provide a more straightforward service to claimants. We intend to publish details of the new scheme, including decisions on a lower limit and on the relevance of the conduct and character of the victim, in a White Paper later this summer.

The treatment of compensation payments as capital for benefit purposes is a matter for the Secretary of State for Social Security. I understand that he has no plans to change the present arrangements.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many payments of between £1,000 and £1,500 were awarded under the criminal injuries compensation scheme in each of the last two years; and if he will provide a regional breakdown of such payments;

(2) how many payments of between £850 and £1,000 were made under the criminal injuries compensation scheme in each of the five years prior to the raising of the lower limit to £1,000; and if he will provide a regional breakdown of such payments.

Mr. Maclean: Details of awards made by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board within various bands are given in the board's published annual reports. Copies are held in the Library.

The number of awards between £850 and £1,000, and between £1,000 and £1,500, is not given, but the table summarises the most recent information about the nearest equivalent bands. Information about the regional breakdown of awards is not collected centrally.

	Awards		
	£800-£999	£1,000-£1,999	£1,000-£2,999
1986-87	2,256		
1987-88	2,250		
1988-89	3,489		
1990-91	4,357	10,031	
1991-92			17,296
1992-93	[information not yet available]		

Immigration Advice

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* the letter of 20 May from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State to the hon. and learned Member for Burton containing the Government's response to the Home Affairs Committee's fourth report, Session 1992-93, on immigration advice post-UKIAS, HC 546.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The following is the text of the letter:

"In this letter, with the agreement of Kenneth Clarke, I am giving you the Government's response to the fourth report of the Home Affairs Committee published on 9 March entitled 'Immigration Advice Post-UKIAS'.

The Committee's Report commended the Planning Group led by Mr. Malins for producing their Report. As you are aware, in a written answer to a Parliamentary Question from Sir John Wheeler on 16 March, I announced that we had asked the Planning Group to take steps to implement their proposals and establish the new body outlined in their Report. We have drawn the Committee's Fourth Report to the attention of the Planning Group so that they may consider the recommendations it contains.

We have noted the concern expressed by the Committee on the proposal that the governing body of the Immigration Appeals Advisory Service should be entirely appointed. Our chief concern has to be that the new organisation should be constituted and structured so as to be able to meet its obligations under Charity Law and to satisfy us that there is proper accountability for grant paid. The proposals made in the Planning Group's Report satisfied these criteria and that Group is proceeding to implement them.

The Committee also refers to the recommendation contained in its Report 'Delays in the Immigration and Nationality Department' that the IAAS should take the lead in establishing a register of reputable agencies in the immigration field. It notes that the Planning Group's proposal on extension and maintenance of liaison with other advice groups and immigration law practitioners could be extended to meet this recommendation. The Government's response to the Committee's Report confirmed that this recommendation had been drawn to the attention of both the Planning Group and the Law Society and that, should such a list (or lists) be drawn up, the Government would be ready to consider making it available to applicants.

I am copying this letter to John Greenway and placing copies in the Library of the House."

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Bosnia

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the criteria for deciding whether and when military intervention is required when protecting Bosnian safe areas.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: UNPROFOR forces throughout Muslim-held territory in Bosnia will continue to closely monitor the situation on the ground and provide the UN command with judgments as to whether, and in what form, it would be necessary to counter any acts of aggression against the safe areas. We and others have declared our willingness, in accordance with United Nations Security Council resolution 836, to make air power available to protect UNPROFOR in the safe areas.

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals the Government have for strengthening the rules of engagement for troops guarding the safe areas in Bosnia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: United Nations Security Council resolution 836 authorises UNPROFOR, acting in self-defence, to take necessary measures including the use of force to reply to bombardment of the safe areas in Bosnia, armed incursion into those areas, and the obstruction of either relief convoys or of the troops themselves. The resolution also provides for the use of air power in and around safe areas to support UNPROFOR in the performance of its mandate. We and others have declared our willingness to make air power available for this purpose.

European Court of Justice

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many cases are currently proceeding against Her Majesty's Government at the European Court of Justice.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Four.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the waiting time for cases, involving Her Majesty's Government, to be judged by the European Court of Justice, over the past seven years; and what is the expected waiting time for cases commencing *(a)* this year and *(b)* in the next three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is not possible without disproportionate cost to give the waiting time for cases involving Her Majesty's Government over the past seven years. However, the court has confirmed that the average waiting time for references from all member states to the European Court in 1991 was 18·5 months, and 24·2 months for all direct actions. The average waiting time in 1992 increased to 18·8 months for references and 25·8 months for direct actions. It is not possible to make any predictions about future litigation before the European Court of Justice.

Human Rights

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will make a statement on the details of the United Kingdom Government's policy towards devising or strengthening appropriate mechanisms or powers for implementing the universal adherence of existing United Nations human rights standards and the enforcement of international legal agreements on human rights in advance of the UN world conference on human rights in Vienna on 14 to 25 June;

(2) what current initiatives he is promoting within the United Nations to strengthen appropriate mechanisms or powers for implementing the universal adherence of existing United Nations human rights standards and the enforcement of international legal agreements on human rights; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will make a statement outlining the United Kingdom Government's policy and specific proposals to strengthen appropriate mechanisms or powers for implementing the universal adherence to UN human rights standards and the enforcement of international legal agreements on human rights;

(4) if he will make a statement on his policy towards the proposals before the United Nations conference on human rights to be held in Vienna on 14 to 25 June to give

consideration to the creation of a UN permanent commissioner for human rights and an international court for human rights.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We regard the implementation of universal human rights standards as a high priority. We recognise the need to strengthen the role of the UN Centre for Human Rights which is the UN body mainly responsible for human rights work. With our EC partners, we have proposed that the post of director of the centre be upgraded to that of Under Secretary-General for Human Rights or High Commissioner for Human Rights. We have also co-sponsored resolutions at the UN General Assembly and the UN Commission on Human Rights calling for the centre to be given a greater share of the existing UN regular budget. We will continue to work towards these objectives at the world conference on human rights.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what role his Department has played in preparations for the United Nations world conference on human rights in Vienna on 14 to 25 June.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have been represented at the four preparatory meetings held in advance of the UN world conference on human rights. We shall also play an active role at the conference itself.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he intends to make a substantive submission to the world conference on human rights in Vienna on 14 to 25 June.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I will lead the United Kingdom delegation to the world conference on human rights, and I will address the conference on behalf of Her Majesty's Government.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to receive a copy of the final agenda for the United Nations world conference on human rights in Vienna on 14 to 25 June; and if it will be made available to the general public.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The agenda for the forthcoming world conference on human rights was adopted as the annex to resolution 47/122 of last year's United Nations General Assembly. As such, it is freely available to the general public.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish the list of *(a)* delegates and *(b)* observers who will represent the United Kingdom at the United Nations world conference on human rights in Vienna on 14 to 25 June, and the non-governmental organisation to which each belongs, where appropriate.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) on 13 May, at column *559*. The precise composition of the delegation is being finalised, and will be transmitted to the conference organisers in due course.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Industrial Heritage Tourism

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the growth and development of industrial heritage tourism.

Mr. Sproat: As the birthplace of the industrial revolution, Britain has a uniquely rich industrial heritage, which is of interest to both domestic and overseas visitors. The English tourist board has identified industrial heritage tourism as a growth area, and launched its promotional campaign "Experience the Making of Britain" earlier this year, in partnership with the private sector. The English tourist board will evaluate the effect of the campaign later this year. I understand that early indications are encouraging.

Conservation of Manuscripts

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on his policy for assisting the conservation of manuscripts.

Mr. Sproat: My right hon. Friend and I recognise the vital importance of the conservation of manuscripts in preserving the nation's heritage. The Department provides an annual grant to the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, enabling it to promote and assist the preservation of historical records. The Government were also instrumental in setting up in 1989 the National Manuscripts Conservation Trust for which they make annual funding available to provide assistance to owners and custodians in preserving manuscripts, documents and archives of national importance. In addition, Government funding for the new British Library building at St. Pancras will allow better preservation of the national collections for present and future users in a pollution-free environment.

Arts Council

Mr. Horam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his statement of 11 December 1992, *Official Report*, columns 1123-33, when he expects to publish the consultant's report on the organisation and structure of the Arts Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Last December, I announced my conclusions on the appropriate balance between central and local decision making on funding. I made clear that the delegation of additional funding responsibilities to the regional arts boards and the devolution of the Scottish and Welsh Arts Councils would have implications for the size and structure of the Arts Council. At my request, and with full co-operation at all levels of the Arts Council, Price Waterhouse has now examined these organisational issues. I have now published its report.

Price Waterhouse has conducted a very full analysis, involving wide consultation both within the Arts Council and outside. Its recommendations include:

- clarification of the Arts Council's relationships with Government, the Regional Arts Boards and clients;
- improvement in the planning system;
- changes to the composition of the Council itself, with an enhanced role as advocate for the arts.

The report also includes possible options for structural changes to the Arts Councils organisation and staffing.

I welcome the thorough way in which Price Waterhouse has undertaken its task. The broad range of its review and the radical nature of some of its recommmendations are fully consistent both with our manifesto commitment to examine the role of the Arts Council and with the terms of my statement on delegated responsibility last December.

I shall, of course, want to consider these recommendations carefully before I reach any decisions. But I should like to make clear now the Government's firm commitments: to the continuing relevance and importance of the arm's length principle; to the continuing central role of the Arts Council as spokesman and agent for the health of the arts in this country; and to ensuring that public funding for the arts is conducted effectively and with economy and efficiency.

The outcome of this review will determine the shape of the Arts Council for the rest of this decade and beyond. As a next step, I have invited the Arts Council to let me have its reactions to Price Waterhouse's report. Clearly, it is important for all concerned that decisions are taken soon, and I very much hope to be able to announce the conclusions I have reached before the summer recess.

Cash Limits

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what changes will be made to his Department's cash limits or running cost limits for 1993-94.

Mr. Brooke: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary revised and new estimates and of the National Lottery etc. Bill, the following changes will be made:

(i) The cash limit for Class XI, Vote 7 (Department of National Heritage administration) will be reduced by £1,426,000 to £25,294,000. The reduction in the cash limit is the net result of a transfer of £1,500,000 to a New Estimate for Class XI, Vote 8, to provide for the anticipated administrative and operational costs of the Office of the National Lottery, offset partly by an increase in provision of £74,000 for the introduction of the repayment for services provided by the Chessington Computer Centre.

(ii) The departmental gross running costs control limit will also be reduced by £1,426,000 from £31,282,000 to £29,856,000 as a result of these changes.

Historic Royal Palaces

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what targets he has set for the Historic Royal Palaces agency.

Mr. Brooke: The following targets have been set for the Historic Royal Palaces agency for the financial year 1993-94:

Financial Targets:
Commercial surplus—£4·5 million
Call on taxpayer—£7·6 million

Visitor Rating Targets:[1]
Value for money—0·7 to 1
Enjoyment—above 1·3
Helpful and friendly staff—above 1·3

Efficiency Target:
2 per cent. on running costs

Conservation Target:
To complete surveys and draw up a programme of building work by November 1993.

[1] Visitor ratings are assessed from market research interviews with 900 visitors, undertaken by independent consultants each summer. 2·0 is Extremely Good; 1·5 is Very Good; 1·0 is Quite Good; 0 is OK; −1·0 is Quite Poor; −2·0 is Very Poor.

I am pleased to note that the agency's commercial income has increased from £14·7 million in 1990-91 to £18·7 million in 1992-93 and its call on the taxpayer is reducing. At the same time, the agency continues to set the highest standards both in conservation and in services to its visitors.

ENVIRONMENT

Select Committee Recommendations

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many Select Committee recommendations have been made about his Department since April 1989; and how many have been accepted.

Mr. Gummer: Since April 1989 the Environment Select Committee has published 27 reports. Details, together with the relevant Government responses, are as follows:

SESSION 1988-89

Fourth Special Report:
Department of the Environment's Main Estimates 1989-90: Observations by the Government on the Third Report of the Committee in Session 1988-89 (HC 564), published 9 August 1989.

Third Report:
Department of the Environment's Main Estimates 1989-90 (HC 305), published 4 July 1989.
Government Reply published as the Committee's Fourth Special Report, Session 1988-89—see above.

Fourth Report:
Property Services Agency Main Estimates 1989-90 (HC 403), published 10 July 1989.
Government Reply published as the Committee's First Special Report, Session 1989-90—see below.

Fifth Report:
British Waterways Board (HC 237), published 9 August 1989.
Government Reply published as Cm. 967 on 6 February 1990.

Sixth Report:
Disposal of Low-Level Radioactive Waste at Drigg (HC 562), published 14 August 1989.
Government Reply published in the *Official Report* on 6 November 1989—Column 413.

Seventh Report:
The proposed European Environment Agency (HC 612), published 13 November 1989.
Government Reply published in the *Official Report* on 8 January 1990—Columns 495-96.

SESSION 1989-90

First Special Report:
Property Services Agency Main Estimates 1989-90: Observations by the Government on the Fourth Report of the Committee in Session 1988-89 (HC 290), published 30 March 1990.

Second Special Report:
Department of the Environment's Main Estimates 1990-91; Observations by the Government on the Third Report of the Committee in Session 1989-90 (HC 672), published 15 November 1990.

First Report:
Contaminated Land (HC 170), published 31 January 1990.
Government Reply published as Cm 1161 on 25 July 1990.

Second Report:
European Community Environmental Policy (HC 372), published 17 May 1990.
Government Reply published in the *Official Report* on 8 September 1990—Columns 495-96.

Third Report:
Department of the Environment's Main Estimates 1990-91 (HC 373), published 9 July 1990.

Government Reply published as the Committee's Second Special Report, Session 1989-90—see above.

Fourth Report:
Pollution of Beaches (HC 12), published 24 July 1990.
Government Reply published as Cm 1363 on 12 December 1990.

Fifth Report:
PSA Services and DOE Property Holdings Main Estimates 1990-91 (HC 414), published 2 August 1990.
Government Reply published as the Committee's First Special Report, Session 1990-91—see below.

SESSION 1990-91

First Special Report:
PSA Services and DOE Property Holdings Main Estimates, 1990-91: Observations by the Government on the Fifth Report of the Committee in Session 1989-90 (HC 164), published 7 February 1991.

First Report:
Environmental Issues in Northern Ireland (HC 39).
Government Reply published as Cm 1484 on 26 March 1991.

Second Report:
Visit by the Committee to Brazil (HC 60), published 18 December 1990.

Third Report:
Climatological and Environmental Effects of Rainforest Destruction (HC 24), published 26 March 1991.
Government Reply published as Cm 1579 on 28 June 1991.

Fourth Report:
DOE, Property Holdings and PSA Services Estimates 1991-92 and DOE Annual Report 1991 (HC 389), published 18 June 1991.
Government Reply published as the Committee's First Special Report, Session 1991-92—see below.

Fifth Report:
London Zoo (HC 427), published 19 June 1991.
Government Reply published in the *Official Report* 18 July 1991—column *240.*

Sixth Report:
Indoor Pollution (HC 61-I and II), published 10 July 1991 (Volume II published 25 July 1991).
Government Reply published as Cm 1633 on 11 September 1991.

Seventh Report:
The EC Draft Directive on the Landfill of Waste (HC 263-I and II), published 19 September 1991.
Government Reply published as Cm 1821 on 5 February 1992.

Eighth Report:
Eco-Labelling (HC 474-I and II), published 5 September 1991.
Government Reply published as Cm 1720 on 6 November 1991.

SESSION 1991-92

First Special Report:
DOE Property Holdings and PSA Services Estimates 1991-92 and DOE Annual Report 1991: Observations by the Government on the Fourth Report of the Committee in Session 1990-91 (HC 16), published 19 November 1991.

Second Special Report:
Review of the Committee's Work 1983-1992 (HC 340), published 12 March 1992.
Government Reply published as DoE publication on 20 October 1992 available in the Library of the House.

First Report:
The Government's Proposals for an Environment Agency (HC 55, published 25 February 1992.
Government Reply published partly in the *Official Report* on 15 July 1992—column *857*—and partly as the Committee's First Special Report, Session 1992-93 (HC 256)—see below.

SESSION 1992-93

First Special Report:
The Government Response to the Committee Report on the Environment Agency (HC 256), published 11 January 1993.

First Report:
Forestry and the Environment (HC 257—I and II), published 10 March 1993.
Government Reply in preparation.

Noise

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of the United Kingdom population is estimated to be exposed to night-time noise levels in excess of 65 dB(A); what assessment he has made of the health effects of such exposure; and what plans he has to meet the targets for noise reduction contained in the European Community's fifth environmental action programme.

Mr. Yeo: Results from a noise incidence study of England and Wales carried out as part of my Department's noise research programme indicate that under 1 per cent. of the population is exposed to night-time noise levels above 65dB(A). Research in this area has not so far shown scientifically demonstrable links between night-time noise levels, loss of sleep and effects on health, but this area is being kept under review.

The importance of a quieter night-time noise environment is recognised in my Department's draft planning policy guidance note on planning and noise. It suggests a group of four noise exposure categories, in which different planning constraints on noise sensitive development are appropriate. Recommended noise levels for each category are set out in the draft guidance for both day-time exposure—07.00 to 23.00—and night-time exposure—23.00-07.00. Where relevant, the suggested noise level figures take account of, and broadly reflect, the EC fifth environment action programme. The draft guidance, a copy of which is in the Library, also offers more general advice on night-time noise exposure issues.

London Docklands

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the London Docklands development corporation expenditure for 1992-93 broken down into *(a)* administration, *(b)* environmental improvements, *(c)* land acquisitions, *(d)* land reclamation, *(e)* services and utilities, *(f)* roads, *(g)* the docklands light railway, *(h)* industry support, *(i)* social facilities, *(j)* housing and *(k)* promotion and publicity.

Sir George Young: The London Docklands development corporation's estimated expenditure for 1992-93, comprised of grant in aid and receipts, was as follows:

	£ million
(a) Administration: (including estate management)	21·1
(b) Environmental Improvements	5·4
(c) Land acquisitions	7·7
(d) Land reclamation	3·8
(e) Services and Utilities	1·1
(f) Roads (including Limehouse Link)	82·1
(g) The Docklands Light Railway (Beckton extension)	52·7
(h) Industry support	0·1
(i) Social facilities	8·2
(j) Housing	4·0
(k) Promotion and publicity	2·7

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost to the London Docklands

development corporation of the banquet to celebrate the completion of the Limehouse link road held on Friday 7 May.

Sir George Young: The LDDC's contribution to the Limehouse link community dinner was £27,750. Other costs were met largely through support from local businesses.

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the London Docklands development corporation's income from the sale of land in 1992-93; and what is the projected income for 1993-94.

Sir George Young: LDDC's income from the sale of land for 1992-93 was £20·014 million and the expected income for 1993-94 is £20·027 million.

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made towards the winding up of the LDDC.

Sir George Young: Discussions are taking place between LDDC and the three docklands boroughs about the progressive withdrawal of the LDDC from the more developed parts of the designated area.

Water Quality

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what action the United Kingdom is taking to prevent the eutrophication of those water bodies which will not be identified as sensitive areas under the EC urban waste water treatment directive because the source of nutrients is from a sewage works of less than 10,000 population equivalent in size;

(2) what mechanisms he will employ to protect sites of high nature conservation interest from damage due to nutrient enrichment water courses.

Mr. Yeo: The National Rivers Authority will continue to impose conditions in consents for discharges which do not come within the scope of the urban waste water treatment directive, to meet any water quality objectives in force for the receiving waters in question. Our proposals for the system of statutory water quality objectives include a specific special eco-system use class in recognition of the needs of nature conservation.

Environmental Protection Partnership

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what request he has received from the Conservation Foundation to support its initiative to foster an environmental protection partnership between the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation.

Mr. Yeo: The Conservation Foundation has written asking for support for its initiative and this request is under consideration.

Water Companies

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been spent by his Department on grants or loans to water companies under section 151 of the Water Industry Act 1991 each year since privatisation.

Mr. Yeo: Since privatisation, under section 151 of the Water Industry Act 1991 or the equivalent provisions of the Rural Water Supplies and Sewerage Acts 1944 to 1971, the following sums have been spent by my Department on grants:

	£ million
1990-91	5·95
1991-92	5·35
1992-93	4·44

There have been no loans.

Waste Water

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the areas in England proposed to him as candidate sensitive areas under the EC urban waste water treatment directive by *(a)* English Nature and *(b)* the National Rivers Authority.

Mr. Yeo: In March 1993, my Department, together with the Welsh Office and the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food, published its response to the consultation exercise it carried out on the criteria and procedures for identifying sensitive areas under the urban waste water treatment directive. The National Rivers Authority has been asked to compile a list of candidate sensitive areas using these criteria. Although English Nature has not made any proposals on the basis of the finalised criteria, it will be consulted about the NRA's list.

Women Council Staff

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many women are currently *(a)* chief executives and *(b)* directors of (i) metropolitan councils, (ii) non-metropolitan district councils, (iii) county councils and (iv) borough councils.

Mr. Baldry: My Department does not collect this information. The Local Government Management Board —the employers' organisation—however has produced the following statistics from its 1992 annual survey, based on responses from 375, out of 450, local authorities in England and Wales:

(a) Chief Executives—7 (out of 375)
Metropolitan districts—1 (out of 31)
Non-Metropolitan districts—4 (out of 278)
Non-Metropolitan counties—0 (out of 44)
London Boroughs—2 (out of 22)

(b) Directors—150 (out of 2,803)
Metropolitan districts—22 (out of 385)
Non-Metropolitan districts—68 (out of 1,670)
Non-Metropolitan counties—27 (out of 498)
London Boroughs—33 (out of 250)

Limehouse Link Road

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what monitoring his Department is undertaking of the proportion of cars using the Limehouse link road which are starting or completing their journeys in the docklands area.

Sir George Young: The LDDC, in liaison with the Department of Transport, is monitoring traffic flows on the new docklands roads, including Limehouse link and on other routes through the docklands area.

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people were employed on the construction of the Limehouse link road.

Sir George Young: The average number of people employed, during construction of the Limehouse link road, was 700.

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total cost of the construction of the Limehouse link road, broken down into *(a)* cost of relocation, *(b)* cost of land acquisition and *(c)* construction costs; and what was the additional cost of bringing the project back on schedule from the delays during the early part of the contract.

Sir George Young: The total construction costs of the Limehouse link road were as follows:

£ million

	Cost
(a) Cost of replacement housing	108·2
(b) Cost of land acquisition	12·6
(c) Final price of construction contract	255·1

There were no additional costs within the terms of the contract to recover the schedule from early delays within the terms of the contract.

Environmental Education

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to put into effect the proposals made in the report on environmental education commissioned from Professor Peter Toyne.

Mr. Yeo: The Government are considering the recommendations in Professor Toyne's report, most of which are directed to the educational establishment. My Department has encouraged industry to formulate its needs as clearly as possible, to help educational institutions to address them.

Relocations and Amalgamations

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the sections and organisations within his Department for which there are plans for relocation or amalgamation.

Mr. Gummer: Following the decision last year to demolish 2 Marsham street, Property Holdings has been asked to find alternative accommodation for the headquarters of my Department. There are also some 90 posts across the Department employed on programmes to be transferred to the Urban Regeneration Agency.

Departmental Buildings

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the buildings currently owned or rented by his Department, together with *(a)* the estimated value, *(b)* the annual rent and *(c)* the annual maintenance cost of each building in the current financial year.

Mr. Baldry: Property Holdings, part of the Department of the Environment, was set up in 1990 to manage the Government common user office estate and holds something in excess of 3,000 properties.

(a) An up-to-date capital valuation of these premises is not available but the estate was last valued at just over £2 billion in 1990. More detailed current information could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

(b) Individual rentals are commercial-in-confidence and cannot be released. However, Property Holdings total estimated rent bill for 1993-94 is £585·4 million.

(c) Maintenance responsibility for the common user estate is shared between Property Holdings and occupying Departments. Some Departments hold on full repairing terms whereas others occupy on an internal repairing basis. Individual maintenance costs therefore are not available within my Department. Property Holdings total maintenance costs for 1993-94 are estimated at £112·84 million.

Small Cetaceans

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the measures adopted in the agreement on the conservation of small cetaceans of the Baltic and North sea will apply throughout United Kingdom waters.

Mr. Yeo: The Government strongly support the agreement. We have also made it clear that we shall apply the spirit of the agreement in order to conserve dolphins and other small cetaceans in all our coastal waters. Work to implement the agreement is already being taken forward on that basis.

Housing, Liverpool

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he received representations from Liverpool city council concerning the level of discounts available on empty properties requiring substantial remedial work; what level of discount is being sought; when he expects to be in a position to make an announcement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Councillor Margaret Clarke wrote to my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction on 26 March asking for consent to increase the discount percentages for the sale of empty properties included in the home opportunities programme from the 30 per cent. allowed under the general consent to 60 per cent.

That request is receiving careful consideration and I hope to reply shortly.

Waste Recycling

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what contracts his Department has placed with consultants in the past year to evaluate the prospects for recycling of construction and demolition wastes; and what information he has on such recycling in other European Community member states.

Mr. Baldry: A contract was placed with Howard Humphreys and Partners Ltd. in November 1992 to carry out research on recycling of demolition and construction wastes in the United Kingdom. It will report towards the end of this year, and will advise on how greater use of these wastes might be achieved and on good environmental practice for recycling plants. The research will also yield information on current practice in other EC countries. The Government are also taking an active role in an EC priority waste streams project on recycling building and demolition wastes.

Local Government Finance

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his decisions on final caps for the authorities which he has designated for capping; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I have laid before the House a draft order, under section 57 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, setting out my decisions on the final caps for the three authorities which have challenged their proposed caps and put forward higher alternatives.

For each of these authorities, I have considered all the available relevant information, including the case made by the authorities in support of a higher cap, before taking my decisions. For Castle Point and Gloucestershire, I have decided to confirm the caps which were initially proposed. In the case of Harlow, I consider that some relaxation would be justified and I have decided to increase its cap by £0·6 million.

These caps are, in my view, reasonable, appropriate and achievable in all the circumstances of the authorities concerned.

The caps for each of the designated authorities and the resulting reductions in a two-adult band D council tax in their area are as follows:

Authority	*Final Cap (£ million)*	*Reduction in Council tax (£)*
Castle Point	7·97	18
Gloucestershire	306·61	55
Harlow	11·80	263

Cash Limits

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes he proposes to make to the cash limit or running cost limit on PSA Services' vote in 1993-94.

Mr. Curry: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary revised estimate, the cash limit for class VII, vote will be reduced by £295,000 from £164,055,000 to £163,760,000. The running cost limit will be reduced by £607,000 from £104,203,000 to £103,596,000.

The reduction in the cash limit is due to the transfer of £205,000 to Property Holdings to cover expenditure on the maintenance of certain security equipment, and also to the transfer of £90,000 to the Welsh Office to cover the cost or redeploying surplus PSAS staff.

The reduction in the running costs limit also reflects a higher provision for running cost receipts as a result of more recent forecasts.

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes he has to announce to his Department's cash limits and running cost limit for 1993-94.

Mr. Gummer: The DOE urban aid non-voted cash limit will be increased by £12,236,000 from £950,671,000 to £962,907,000. This includes increased grant in aid of £10,364,000 to the London Docklands development corporation for work on the Beckton extension of the docklands light railway. It also includes grant in aid of £2 million to the Tyne and Wear development corporation to provide additional industrial sites within its urban development area. There is also a decrease of £128,000 to reflect a transfer to the Department of Health in respect of urban programme health authority projects. This will be offset in part by a surrender of unallocated PES of £2,210,000 and the remainder will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Housing Associations (Land Purchases)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to ensure that housing associations pay the proper value of land purchased from local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 26 May 1993]:* Housing associations are now the main providers of new social housing. The Government encourage local authorities, in their role as housing enablers, to release land free—or at a reduced cost—to housing associations in return for increased nominations for people from their waiting list. The additional nominations assist the local authority in meeting its statutory obligations in respect of housing the homeless. It is for local authorities to decide in each individual case.

Coal

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide financial support to local authorities investing in coal-fired heating systems and other coal-burning equipment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 27 May 1993]:* The Government have no plans to do so at present.

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what would have been the impact per authority in 1993-94 if the weight of the additional educational needs index in distributing primary and secondary standard spending assessments had been reduced by *(a)* 0·5 per cent., *(b)* 1 per cent., *(c)* 5 per cent. and *(d)* 10 per cent.; and what implications this would have for the area cost adjustment.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* I have placed in the Library a table which shows the effects on each authority's education standard spending assessment for 1993-94 of reducing the weight on the additional educational needs index within the primary and secondary elements by *(a)* 0·5 per cent., *(b)* 1 per cent., *(c)* 5 per cent. and *(d)* 10 per cent. The area cost adjustment factors are applied after the results of applying the additional educational needs index.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what would be the impact on each authority's standard spending assessment of reducing the weight of the ethnicity factor within the additional educational needs index to *(a)* 20 per cent., *(b)* 10 per cent. and *(c)* 2 per cent.; and what are the reasons for including the ethnicity factor within the additional educational needs index.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* The ethnicity factor has a weight of one within the additional educational needs index compared with 1·5 for the other two factors. I have placed in the Library today a table which shows the education standard spending assessment element for all authorities incorporating a reduction in the weight on ethnicity from 1 to *(a)* 0·2, *(b)* 0·1 and *(c)* 0·02. Ethnicity—or, more precisely, the country of origin of child or of the head of the household—is used to reflect the additional costs associated with educating children for whom English is not their first language.

Radon

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to make mandatory grants for payment to protect houses against radon.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* No. Local authorities have powers under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 to award discretionary renovation grants to help home owners with radon remedial measures. The Government consider it appropriate for authorities to determine the need to grant aid such work in the light of local circumstances and priorities.

Planning Inquiries

Ms Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions in each year since 1979 he has overruled the result of a planning inquiry by an inspector appointed by him.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* The number of occasions on which the Secretary of State has determined a planning appeal, following a local public inquiry, contrary to the recommendations of the inspector, is as follows:

Year	*Number*
1979	17
1980	15
1981	34
1982	20
1983	13
1984	16
1985-86[1]	25
1986-87[2]	26
1987-88	18
1988-89	19
1989-90	21
1990-91	17
1991-92	7
1992-93	[3]5

[1] From 1 January 1985 to 31 March 1986.
[2] 1986-87 and subsequent years are 1 April to 31 March.
[3] Data available to 31 December 1992.

Environmental Impact Assessments

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what steps he is taking to implement the recommendations for more satisfactory cost-effective compliance with Council directive 85/337/EEC contained in COM (93) 28 final—EC Cons Doc 5975/93;

(2) if he will place in the Library a copy of his Department's report to the European Parliament and Council on the application and effectiveness of EC directive 85/337.

Mr. Curry *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* The Government has made no report to the European Parliament or Council on the application and effectiveness of directive 85/337/EEC. The European Commission has recently submitted such a report in COM (93) 28 final. A memorandum on that document has been submitted by my noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment and placed in the Library of the House.

Drinking Water

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which other EC countries publish national figures on the quality of their drinking water supply which are comparable to those of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* I am not aware of any information on the quality of drinking water supplies provided by other EC countries which is comparable in extent and detail to that published in the United Kingdom.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Kenya

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list each of the aid projects in Kenya which are at present receiving financial assistance from the United Kingdom Government.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The table lists the capital and technical co-operation projects currently supported through the bilateral aid programme. In addition, funds are being provided for 17 projects under the joint funding scheme and two projects through the aid and trade provision.

Project	*Total cost of Project £'000*
Agriculture and Livestock	
Rehabilitation of South Nyanza Sugar Factory	4·660
Agricultural Information Centre	94
Tea Research Foundation/Natural Resources Institute Collaboration	28
National Agricultural Research Project	7·640
Kenya Trypanosomiasis Research Institute	1·391
Forestry	
Indigenous Forest Conservation	4·860
Conservation	
Protected Areas and Wildlife Services	3·661
National Museum of Kenya	
Plant Conservation and Propagation Unit	467
Energy	
Geothermal Energy Project	1·295
Department of Mines and Geology	331
Construction	
Technical Co-operation for Ministry of Public Works	183
Roads	
Molo-Litein	12·080
Tea Roads Feasibility Study	416
Silibwet Forest Road Design	198
Highways Sector Field Manager	39

Project	Total cost of Project £'000
Railways	
Kenya Railways Phase II	9·647
Ports	
Kenya Ports Authority	11·327
Small Scale Enterprise	
Assistance to Youth Polytechnics	157
K-Rep Juhudi Credit	967
Public Administration and Good Government	
Kenya Institute of Administration	1·441
Kenya Institute of Management	580
Office of Controller and Auditor General	243
Assistance to Department of Government Investments and Public Enterprises	82
Machakos Environmental Management Study	20
Education	
Thames Polytechnic/Kenya Polytechnic Link	800
Moi University/Oxford Forestry Institute Link	530
University of Nairobi Microcomputer Project	710
National Programme for Student Communication Skills in Universities	820
Kenyatta University English Department	282
Kenyatta University Science Faculty	1·650
Moi University Library	8,373
Moi Faculty of Information Sciences	911
Strengthening of Primary Education	3·325
Teachers Resource Centres	96
Health and Population	
World Bank Third Population Project	4·601
Moi University Faculty of Health Sciences	185
Isiolo Hospital Immediate Support	549
Senior Health Planner/Economist	180
Family Planning Services	2·000
AMREF Health Care Support Unit	262

Joint Funding Projects

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 19 April, *Official Report*, column *30*, on joint funding scheme projects, what were the activities engaged in to which his Department had not agreed and which caused the request to reimburse the grant; and how this was discovered.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Concern arose over this project when it was discovered that it included an element of evangelism. It is not the purpose of the joint funding scheme to support such activities, and World Vision was asked to reimburse the grant advanced to this project. It accepted our decision and readily returned the funds. The problem came to light when a representative of the British embassy in Jakarta visited the project.

Mr. Chris Hani

Mr. Cabom: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from local authorities on the assassination of Chris Hani.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have received a number of letters from local authorities and other organisations following Mr. Hani's assassination.

Development Meetings

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the Minister for Overseas Development last met her EC colleagues to discuss development issues; and what was decided.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development attended the Development Council in Brussels on 25 May. The Council agreed on future work to improve the co-ordination of EC development policies, starting with poverty and health issues. It agreed resolutions on emergency assistance, rehabilitation in some sub-Saharan African countries, South Africa and on human rights, democracy and development. The Council also discussed the situation in a number of specific African countries, the follow-up to the UN Conference on Environment and Development, women in development and population policy.

"Children of Iraq"

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response he has made to the study "Children of Iraq", commissioned by UNICEF by Dr. Eric Hoskins, Oxford epidemiologist, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 7 June 1993]*: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him today by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, column *226-27*.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Pensions

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 26 April, *Official Report*, columns *292-94*, what amounts of pension costs are attributable to current public sector pensioners *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* the most recent year for each Department or pension scheme; and if he will list the source references which show how such items are disclosed in national accounts.

Mr. Portillo: The costs of benefits, including transfer values, paid by each of the main public service pension schemes in 1979-80 and 1992-93 are as follows:

	1979-80 £m	1992-93 £m
NHS Superannuation Scheme (England and Wales)	299·4	1,689·1
NHS Superannuation Scheme (Scotland)	36·4	243·4
Teachers Superannuation Scheme (England and Wales)	437·1	2,503·0
Teachers Superannuation Scheme (Scotland)	58·1	269·2
Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme	584·0	2,156·2
Armed Forces Pension Scheme	460·1	1,732·3
Local Government Superannuation Scheme (England and Wales)	543·3	[1]2,209·8
Local Government Superannuation Scheme (Scotland)	52·5	[1]220·4

[1] Figures for 1990-91, the most recent year for which figures are available.

For the NHS, teachers, civil service and armed forces schemes the source references are the appropriation

accounts for 1979-80 and the supply estimates for 1992-93. For the local government schemes, the source references are the yearbooks of "Local Government Financial Statistics".

The costs above are not shown individually in national accounts, but are shown in aggregate in table 4·10 of the "United Kingdom National Accounts"—the CSO Blue Book, HMSO, 1992. Their treatment is described in the "United Kingdom National Accounts, Sources and Methods", HMSO 1985.

Pension Contributions

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will estimate the full-year yield in 1993-94 of taxing employers' pension contributions in excess of *(a)* £7,000, *(b)* £10,000, *(c)* £15,000 and *(d)* £20,000 per year as a benefit in kind;

(2) what is his estimate of the cost of tax relief for employers' contributions to occupational pension schemes and personal pension schemes in 1992-93 and 1993-94 for the top 1 per cent. of taxpayers; how many taxpayers are in receipt of contributions; and what is the average contribution;

(3) what is his estimate of the cost of direct income tax relief for occupational pension schemes and personal pension schemes in force in 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94 for *(a)* higher rate taxpayers and *(b)* basic rate taxpayers;

(4) what is his estimate of the cost of tax relief for *(a)* employers' and *(b)* employees' contributions to occupational pension schemes in 1992-93 and 1993-94 for (i) higher rate taxpayers and (ii) basic rate taxpayers giving in each case the number of taxpayers in receipt of employers' contributions and the average contribution.

Mr. Dorrell: I regret that this detailed distributional information is not available. Available statistics on the total costs are published in chapter 6 of "Inland Revenue Statistics 1992".

Business Enterprise Scheme

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the number of BES shareholders.

Mr. Dorrell: A reliable estimate is not available.

Tax Reliefs

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the cost of direct income tax reliefs in force in 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94 in respect of *(a)* higher rate taxpayers and *(b)* basic rate taxpayers, giving in each case the number of taxpayers concerned and their average income.

Mr. Dorrell: Available information on the major income tax reliefs is given in the table:

	Higher rate taxpayers			*Basic or lower rate taxpayers*		
	Cost of relief £ million	*Number of taxpayers with relief* million	*Average income of taxpayers with relief* £	*Cost of relief* £ million	*Number of taxpayers with relief* million	*Average income of taxpayers with relief* £
1991-92						
MIRAS	800	1·1	53,000	4,560	7·2	16,000
Employees contributions to occupational pension schemes	610	0·7	45,000	1,650	7·7	15,000
Contributions to personal pension schemes	470	0·3	58,000	560	2·9	13,000
Other reliefs	400	0·5	61,000	270	2·7	15,000
1992-93						
MIRAS	710	1·1	53,000	3,860	7·3	16,000
Employees contributions to occupational pension schemes	660	0·7	45,000	1,590	7·4	16,000
Contributions to personal pension schemes	440	0·3	58,000	550	2·8	13,000
Other reliefs	400	0·5	62,000	280	2·6	14,000
1993-94						
MIRAS	620	1·2	52,000	3,210	7·4	16,000
Employees contributions to occupational pension schemes	720	0·8	45,000	1,650	7·2	16,000
Contributions to personal pension schemes	440	0·3	58,000	560	2·8	14,000
Other reliefs	410	0·5	61,000	280	2·6	14,000

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 20 May, *Official Report*, column *284*, to what investigations the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise have been subject by the Data Protection Registrar in relation to a suspected breach of a data protection principle; if he will summarise the nature of each complaint with the date it was made; and what remedial action was taken by his Department to ensure future compliance with the principle subject to the investigation.

Mr. Dorrell: The Data Protection Registrar's records show that the Inland Revenue has received 17 complaints concerning suspected breaches of data protection principles. The principles involved and the dates on which the complaints were made are as follows:

Complaint Type	Number Received	Dates Received
Principle 1	2	19 October 1984 24 July 1989
Principle 5	6	29 July 1988 18 August 1989 16 February 1993 22 March 1993 12 March 1993 18 March 1993
Principle 7	5	31 December 1986 11 May 1988 8 May 1989 16 October 1989 3 February 1992
Principle 8	1	24 March 1993
Unauthorised disclosure	3	15 September 1989 31 October 1989 3 April 1992

The Data Protection Registrar has been satisfied in all cases in which investigations are not still in progress and no remedial action to ensure compliance with data protection principles has been necessary.

Between 17 December 1987 and 30 November 1992, the Data Protection Registrar recorded seven suspected breaches of data protection principles concerning Her Majesty's Customs and Excise. Details are as follows:

Complaint Type	Number Received	Dates Received
Principle 1	1	30 May 1989
Principle 3	1	12 September 1991
Principle 5	1	3 April 1989 17 December 1987 20 January 1989
Principle 7	3	10 November 1992
Unauthorised Disclosure	1	30 November 1992

In six cases the matter has been resolved to the satisfaction of the Data Protection Registrar. The seventh, a case of unauthorised disclosure, is under investigation.

European Community States (Expenditure)

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest information he has on average public expenditure by member states of the EC, as a proportion of gross domestic product, on *(a)* education, *(b)* policing, *(c)* transport, *(d)* the arts and *(e)* science; what is the equivalent United Kingdom figure in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: Data on categories of public expenditure in EC countries are included in the OECD's national accounts, volume II.

Jubilee Line Extension

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what Treasury guarantees have been given in respect of the funding of the proposed Jubilee line extension; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The Treasury has issued no guarantees in relation to any part of the funding of the Jubilee line extension. Government funding has, however, been earmarked for the public sector contribution to the cost of the line—see, for example, "The Government's Expenditure Plans for Transport 1993-94 to 1995-96", Cm 2206.

Cash Limits

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes are proposed to the cash and running costs limits for 1993-94 in respect of the office of HM Paymaster General.

Sir John Cope: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for the office of HM Paymaster General—class XVII, vote 13—will be increased by £1,532,000 to £4,400,000, and the running cost limit by £113,000 from £25,178,000 to £25,291,000. These increases reflect the costs of capital investment in equipment associated with the development of a replacement pensions computer systems; take account of the full cost element of the Paymaster General's depreciation expenses repayable as Consolidated Fund extra receipts; and provide for additional VAT payments to Customs and Excise. The increase will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes are proposed in the cash and running cost limits for 1993-94 for the Inland Revenue.

Mr. Dorrell: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary revised estimate, the cash limit for class XVII, vote 6 will be reduced by £26,765,000 from £1,690,968,000 to £1,664,203,000. There is no change in the Department's running costs limit. The change in the cash limit arises from an increase in the charges paid by the Department of Social Security to the Inland Revenue in respect of the administration costs of collecting national insurance contributions.

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes are proposed to the Treasury's cash and running costs limits for 1993-94.

Mr. Nelson: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XVII, vote 1 1993-94 will be increased by a net £450,000 from £76,017,000 to £76,467,000. The increase is mainly to meet publication costs of the retail and institutional guides to investing in gilts. These costs will be fully offset by a reduction in the Bank of England's non-voted cash limit and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

The running costs limit will be increased by £485,000 from £79,136,000 to £79,621,000 reflecting, in addition to the costs of publishing the gilts brochures, the transfer of staff and functions from the Department of Trade and Industry—class IV, vote 1—and to the Cabinet Office: Office of Public Service and Science—class XVIII, vote 1.

EDUCATION

Retired Teachers (Recruitment)

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what consideration he has given to assisting schools to recruit on short-term secondment retired

teachers who will undertake the testing of seven and 11-year-olds in order to relieve classroom teachers of this duty.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department has not given consideration to this particular issue. However, the review that Sir Ron Dearing is conducting of the national curriculum and assessment framework has the specific remit to consider how the tests can be made more manageable. Decisions on how schools might best make arrangements for the tests will be taken in the light of the review.

School Transport (Safety)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to produce school transport safety guidelines for local education authorities.

Mr. Forth: The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents published a report on school transport safety in 1991. It included a code of good practice. The Department contributed to the preparation of the report, and arranged for its distribution to all local education authorities.

Illiteracy

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what figures he has for the level of illiteracy in each EC member state.

Mr. Boswell: International comparisons with other countries of levels of illiteracy are not held centrally.

Mature Students

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will list the local education authorities that currently make discretionary awards for mature students and the total sums budgeted for this purpose in the latest year for which figures are available;

(2) if he will make a statement as to the progress of his Department's policy regarding the award of discretionary grants for mature students.

Mr. Boswell: It is for each local education authority to determine its own policy and set its own budget for discretionary awards. My right hon. Friend does not seek to influence authorities in these matters and does not routinely collect detailed information on authorities' policies and budgets for discretionary awards.

Education Authority Staff

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many *(a)* officers and *(b)* other persons are employed by each education authority in England and Wales.

Mr. Forth: Information on the number of employees of each local education authority is currently being compiled by the Local Government Management Board from data collected on behalf of the joint staffing watch, a joint group of central and local government, and will be available in due course. I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Education Authorities (Administration)

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the annual cost of administering each education authority in each of the last three years.

Mr. Forth: The information is given in the table. The table shows spending by each LEA on administration in cash for 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92, the latest year for which information on actual spending is available. Figures may not always be strictly comparable between LEAs due to differing local accounting practices.

LEA	*Expenditure on administration*		
	1989-90 £000	*1990-91* £000	*1991-92* £000
ILEA	108,067	—	—
Corporation of London	—	474	440
Camden	—	8,164	7,791
Greenwich	—	7,799	13,094
Hackney	—	15,331	9,213
Hammersmith	—	7,564	7,929
Islington	—	11,889	11,611
Kensington	—	4,668	4,922
Lambeth	—	11,152	10,500
Lewisham	—	12,391	10,168
Southwark	—	7,151	6,987
Tower Hamlets	—	7,746	8,138
Wandsworth	—	12,915	3,498
Westminster	—	7,876	8,094
Barking	3,625	4,334	4,439
Barnet	5,103	5,469	5,893
Bexley	4,662	5,281	4,814
Brent	6,594	6,446	6,492
Bromley	4,244	4,828	4,062
Croydon	5,926	7,396	5,811
Ealing	7,954	8,072	8,534
Enfield	5,862	6,895	8,894
Haringey	6,255	9,881	5,852
Harrow	4,566	3,228	4,160
Havering	4,502	5,308	5,413
Hillingdon	5,050	6,705	5,298
Hounslow	5,110	4,798	4,089
Kingston-upon-Thames	3,438	3,298	3,349
Merton	3,839	4,605	4,902
Newham	6,285	7,287	7,215
Redbridge	4,536	4,400	4,860
Richmond-upon-Thames	3,449	4,420	3,855
Sutton	5,547	6,488	6,007
Waltham Forest	4,567	6,194	6,642
Birmingham	18,903	19,434	18,676
Coventry	8,332	9,429	12,965
Dudley	4,971	8,538	8,351
Sandwell	4,909	6,111	5,888
Solihull	2,558	3,086	3,200
Walsall	3,711	4,855	4,310
Wolverhampton	5,325	6,207	6,174
Knowsley	3,328	3,050	3,264
Liverpool	7,226	7,678	7,724
St. Helens	1,863	4,383	4,671
Sefton	5,644	5,503	5,369
Wirral	6,277	4,880	5,350
Bolton	4,643	5,746	5,889
Bury	2,954	3,110	3,277
Manchester	8,102	9,230	9,704
Oldham	4,371	9,156	2,501
Rochdale	3,529	2,810	2,194
Salford	6,105	9,131	9,357
Stockport	1,980	4,188	4,050
Tameside	2,777	3,279	3,092
Trafford	2,676	2,693	2,719
Wigan	4,323	4,023	4,051
Barnsley	2,961	3,396	3,524
Doncaster	3,797	3,805	4,079
Rotherham	3,384	2,950	4,060
Sheffield	9,727	8,020	8,199
Bradford	7,890	8,289	4,783
Calderdale	3,764	3,480	3,169
Kirklees	8,538	10,144	9,478
Leeds	10,068	12,150	11,433
Wakefield	5,423	4,303	4,417
Gateshead	3,800	4,422	3,982
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	5,996	7,192	5,859
North Tyneside	3,382	3,132	2,386

LEA	Expenditure on administration 1989-90 £000	1990-91 £000	1991-92 £000
South Tyneside	3,422	3,059	2,830
Sunderland	3,542	3,450	3,290
Avon	14,993	17,957	15,561
Bedfordshire	7,845	9,259	10,286
Berkshire	12,716	11,757	11,377
Buckinghamshire	11,429	14,682	16,315
Cambridgeshire	11,919	14,653	11,153
Cheshire	14,488	17,167	14,022
Cleveland	10,206	11,844	12,201
Cornwall	7,215	9,158	10,019
Cumbria	10,551	11,186	8,656
Derbyshire	13,858	14,461	15,355
Devon	10,815	9,068	13,140
Dorset	7,927	9,157	8,754
Durham	5,961	6,283	6,599
East Sussex	6,931	7,908	10,149
Essex	25,756	26,782	26,253
Gloucestershire	8,023	8,900	8,906
Hampshire	16,545	19,133	21,363
Hereford and Worcester	7,729	8,666	9,837
Hertfordshire	9,354	12,826	15,280
Humberside	12,311	13,977	14,185
Isle of Wight	2,465	3,207	3,688
Kent	18,742	26,195	13,889
Lancashire	21,051	17,783	19,373
Leicestershire	10,845	12,708	12,902
Lincolnshire	8,178	9,549	10,421
Norfolk	8,275	10,255	14,922
North Yorkshire	8,901	8,937	9,266
Northamptonshire	8,868	9,212	7,903
Northumberland	4,250	3,897	4,636
Nottinghamshire	15,909	16,873	21,294
Oxfordshire	7,451	12,428	9,245
Shropshire	4,607	4,808	5,429
Somerset	8,062	7,537	9,178
Staffordshire	12,252	14,476	13,846
Suffolk	9,981	9,501	11,252
Surrey	18,626	20,663	16,990
Warwickshire	7,796	8,666	9,396
West Sussex	11,449	8,624	9,750
Wiltshire	8,039	7,753	8,914

Notes:

1. The figures for all years consist of net recurrent expenditure on LEA administration including central local authority administration expenditure recharged to education.

2. For 1989-90, the figures for Haringey, Hounslow, Manchester, North Tyneside and Wakefield LEAs are estimates; for 1990-91, the figure for Greenwich LEA is an estimate; and for 1991-92, the figures for Hackney, Haringey, Islington, North Tyneside and Walsall are subject to final checking by the Department of the Environment and the Department for Education.

Manor School, Byfleet

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he now expects to reach a decision on the application by the governors of the Manor grant-maintained first school, Byfleet to add a nursery class at their school.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend hopes to decide the proposals shortly.

Church Schools

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what guidelines he has issued on the admissions criteria for entry to voluntary controlled and voluntary aided Church schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend invited comments last December on a draft circular on school admissions. This stressed that admissions criteria for all maintained schools should be objective, clear and reasonable, and should give parents a good idea of the prospects of gaining a place for their child at their preferred school. My right hon. Friend is considering responses to the consultation.

Cash Limits

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what changes he has to announce to cash limits on votes within his responsibility for 1993-94.

Mr. Patten: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary revised estimate, the cash limit for vote 1, schools, will be reduced, by £313,000 from £743,210,000 to £742,897,000. The reduction takes account of the appropriation in aid of £321,000 from the Welsh Office as its contribution towards expenditure on certain joint England and Wales programmes. This is partly offset by a transfer of £8,000 from the Chessington Computer Centre for the provision of payroll services in respect of the European Schools on the centre's becoming an agency on 1 April 1993.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Sickness and Invalidity Benefit, Durham

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the latest statistics on the number of persons in the Durham city area who are unemployed and are receiving sickness and invalidity benefit.

Mr. Scott: The administration of sickness and invalidity benefit are matters for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Gerry Steinberg, dated 8 June 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what are the latest statistics on the number of persons in the Durham City area who are unemployed and are receiving Sickness Benefit (SB) and Invalidity Benefit (IVB).

The information is not available in the format requested and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The latest statistics available from the Agency's Durham Branch Office within the North Durham District, which includes the Durham City area, relate to SB and IVB only.

A total of 5,224 customers are claiming these benefits currently, 1,011 claiming SB and 4,213 claiming IVB. These figures include customers who have claimed but are not in receipt of benefit.

As Agency District boundaries do not correspond with county or borough boundaries the figures include some customers living in areas other than Durham City.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report*. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

National Insurance

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what estimate he has made of the value of employees' national insurance contributions illegally retained by employers each year;

(2) how many successful prosecutions have taken place of employers who have illegally retained employees' national insurance contributions in each year since 1977-78; and what have been the sums of money involved *(a)* in each region and *(b)* nationally;

(3) what plans he has to commission research into the extent of employers illegally retaining employees' national insurance contributions.

Mr. Hague: The administration of national insurance is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive of the Contributions Agency. She will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from George Bertram to Mr. Alan Milburn, undated:

As Chief Executive of the Contributions Agency, Miss Ann Chant is responsible for answering questions about relevant operational matters. However, in her absence I, as Deputy Chief Executive have been asked to reply to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Questions about employees' National Insurance Contributions being retained illegally by employers. Because of the nature of the questions I have combined the responses.

At this stage, the Agency has no plans to commission research into the extent of employers' failure to pay over employees' contributions. However, such failures do come to light when the Agency's inspectors make survey visits. These visits are aimed at identifying employers not complying with National Insurance law and also providing advice and guidance to those employers requiring assistance. One of the Secretary of State's High Level Targets for the Agency is that in the 1993-94 year 121,000 such surveys should be made. This equates to approximately 10 per cent. of the employers in the country representing a considerable investment in effective monitoring and enforcement of employers' liabilities. Similar targets set for 1991-92 and 1992-93 were met and exceeded by the Agency.

Another means by which the Agency identifies the non-payment of contributions is based upon employees querying details shown on their National Insurance records. At the end of each tax year returns of payments made by employers are processed and employees' contributions are recorded on their individual National Insurance records. Following this, deficient records are identified and where appropriate, action taken to inform the people concerned. Steps are taken to obtain payment from employers, or an explanation as to why there has apparently been non-compliance. Where necessary civil proceedings or criminal prosecutions are instituted to recover any arrears.

Information is not available about the number of employers who are not currently meeting their liability timeously, nor of the monetary value of employees' contributions affected by such action.

In the tables attached as an annex I have provided details of the number of cases authorised for both civil and criminal proceedings against employers from November 1977 to March 1993 (the latest date for which figures are available). I must emphasise however, that these figures include proceedings that were authorised for a wide variety of reasons (for instance, failure to keep proper records, underpayments arising from incorrect assessment of NI liability) and do not relate soley to failure to pay over employees' contributions. Similarly, the monetary values relate to the total sums of NICs involved, and not just the employee's share of the contributions due.

I regret that I am unable to give you the specific information that you requested but I hope that the information that I have provided will prove helpful.

The annex has been placed in the Library.

Cash Limits

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposed changes there are in the cash limit and running costs limit of his Department for 1993-94.

Mr. Scott: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XIII, vote 4 will be increased by £810,000 from £2,526,356,000 to £2,527,166,000. The increase takes account of a transfer into running costs of £952,000 from tourism, roads and transport, housing, other environmental services, including civil defence, education, arts and libraries and health and personal social services, and Wales—class XV, vote 5. This is partially offset by a transfer to Department of Health—class XII, vote 3—of £82,000 running costs and an increase in appropriations in aid of £60,000 and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

In addition to the running cost transfers included above, there is also a net reduction of £5,283,000 to take account of a transfer from running costs to other current expenditure—£5,227,000—and a £56,000 increase in value added tax refunds.

As a result of these changes, the running cost limit of the Department of Social Security will be reduced by £4,413,000 from £2,906,991,000 to £2,902,578,000.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Brewery Industry

Mr. Wareing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions on competition within the brewery industry have been held at his meetings with other European Trade Ministers; and if he will make a statement on how European competition policy relates to the United Kingdom brewery industry.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has had no specific discussions on competition in the brewing industry with other European Ministers, although other issues of relevance to the brewing industry, for example duty levels, have been discussed at the EC level. The United Kingdom brewing industry is subject to normal EC competition law; certain exclusive supply agreements in the brewing industry benefit from an exemption from article 85 of the treaty of Rome.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will consult the National Association of Inntrepreneur Lessees on the operation of the Beer Orders.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Neither I nor my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade have any plans to carry out consultation on the operation of the Beer Orders. In recent correspondence with my Department, members of the National Association of Inntrepreneur Lessees (NAIL) have already made known their concerns about recent changes in the brewing industry.

Cash Limits

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what changes are being made to his Department's cash limits for 1993-94.

Mr. Heseltine: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate the cash limit for class

IV, vote 4—privatisation of the coal industry—will be increased by £2,500,000 from £5,000,000 to £7,500,000. The increased provision is sought to meet further expenditure on advisers' fees required for the privatisation programme and for assistance for commissioning consultants by management and employee buy-out teams.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library a full copy of the transcripts of the proceedings of the Lord Justice Scott inquiry into exports of defence equipment and dual-use goods to Iraq.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* Yes.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Relocation and Amalgamation

Mr. Roberts Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the sections and organisations within his Department for which there are plans for relocation or amalgamation.

Mr. Mates: It is proposed to relocate the following functions from Belfast and Bangor to Londonderry in a phased way over the next 12 to 18 months:

the Northern Ireland Civil Service Commission;
Teachers Administration and Salaries Branch, Department of Education;
Agriculture Improvement and Livestock Production and General Branches, Department of Agriculture; and
Human Resource Directorate 6 (formerly Health Service Superannuation Branch) Department of Health and Social Services.

In addition, it is proposed to move the headquarters of the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland from the Stormont area to Belfast city centre later this year; and also relocate the Agricultural Development Service's Co. Down office from Knockbreda to Downpatrick when suitable premises are available.

There are no plans at present to amalgamate any functions.

Education Administration

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received from the South Eastern education and library board regarding the proposed restructuring of educational administration in Northern Ireland; what steps he intends to take to ensure full and comprehensive monitoring of education policy in Northern Ireland when the administrative structure is finally introduced; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: No formal representations have yet been made to me by the South Eastern education and library board. Arrangements for the monitoring of educational policy must reflect any new administrative structures, and can therefore only be determined when those structures have been decided upon. No decisions on these will be taken until after the end of the consultation period.

Pensions Payments

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received from people in Northern Ireland over the proposals to pay future pensions through banks and building societies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: A small number of representations have been received about steps taken to increase awareness of the advantages of automated credit transfer, mostly from hon. Members on behalf of several of their constituents and a few members of the public. The majority of representations have been on behalf of pensioners who mistakenly believed that they would no longer be able to receive their pension and benefits through post offices.

Eastern Health and Social Services Board

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland following the establishment of the internal inquiry by the Eastern health and social services board following the decision in Duffy *v.* Eastern health and social services board, if he will indicate *(a)* those findings of the inquiry he has endorsed, *(b)* those findings of the inquiry he has rejected, *(c)* those recommendations he has endorsed and *(d)* those recommendations he has not endorsed.

Mr. Ancram: My noble Friend Lord Arran has neither endorsed nor rejected any findings or recommendations of the internal inquiry conducted by the Eastern health and social services board following the decision in Duffy *v.* Eastern health and social services board.

Fair Employment

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide details of the expenditure in each area health board for the past financial year in defending or responding to fair employment cases showing *(a)* the total number of cases and total damages paid as a result of a Fair Employment Commission/Tribunal decision, *(b)* the number of cases and compensation paid to claimants who had lodged cases with the FEC/FET, *(c)* the number of cases and total compensation paid to members of staff who had indicated an intention of taking a case to the FEC/FET and *(d)* the total administrative costs, including legal and management costs, in defending or awarding complaints to the FEC/FET.

Mr. Ancram: The information is as follows:

Expenditure by the health boards on defending or responding to fair employment cases—1992-93

(a) Total number of cases and total damages paid as a result of an FEC/FET decision

Board	*Number of cases*	*Amount of damages*
Eastern	Nil	Nil
Northern	Nil	Nil
Southern	[1]19	Nil
Western	Nil	Nil

[1] 12 cases withdrawn, seven are still ongoing.

(b) Number of cases and compensation paid to claimants who had lodged cases with the FEC/FET

Board	Number of cases	Compensation paid £
Eastern	5	73,000
Northern	Nil	Nil
Southern	[1]19	Nil
Western	4	[2]7,000

[1] See *(a)*.
[2] One case from 1990 settled on 18 January 1993 (out of court).

(c) Number of cases and total compensation paid to members of staff who had indicated an intention of taking a case to the FEC/FET

Board	Number of cases	Total compensation paid
Eastern	Nil	Nil
Northern	Nil	Nil
Southern	[1]19	Nil
Western	Nil	Nil

[1] See *(a)*.

(d) Total administrative costs, including legal and management costs, in defending or awarding complaints to the FEC/FET

It is not possible to determine any of the above costs because of the wide-ranging duties of the staff involved in these areas, and because of the number of people who become involved as a result of investigations of allegations of discrimination.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will specify the total amount of damages or compensation paid cases in which there was a no publicity clause and the number of times that such a clause was indicated in settlement terms of cases *(a)* held before the Fair Employment Commission/Tribunal, *(b)* lodged with the FEC/FET and *(c)* when it was intended a case was going to be brought before the FEC/FET.

Mr. Atkins: A "no publicity" clause has been included in 27 settlements where the applicant was assisted by the Fair Employment Commission. Six of these were settled during the course of the FET hearing; the remaining 21 were settled before the cases were heard by the FET.

As the parties to these settlements agreed to a "no publicity" clause, it would not be appropriate to publish details of the amount of the settlements reached.

Information is not available on whether there are any cases, not assisted by the Fair Employment Commission, which were settled on these terms.

Agricultural Research and Development

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what funds, in cash and constant prices, were allocated to the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture research and development budgets for each year since 1978; what is the projected spending for 1993-94 and 1994-95; and what proportion of the departmental budget for research and development is accounted for by *(a)* the Central Science Laboratory, *(b)* the Veterinary Medicines Directorate, *(c)* the Central Veterinary Laboratory and *(d)* ADAS.

Mr. Ancram: The available information is given in the table.

Year	Funding for DANI R & D £ million, cash	Funding for DANI R & D £ million, 1977-78 prices[2]
1978-79	6·7	6·2
1979-80	6·9	5·5
1980-81	7·1	4·9
1981-82	7·4	4·6
1982-83	7·6	4·3
1983-84	7·8	4·3
1984-85	8·0	4·2
1985-86	8·1	4·0
1986-87	8·3	4·0
1987-88	8·5	3·9
1988-89	8·7	3·8
1989-90	8·9	3·6
1990-91	9·0	3·3
1991-92	9·2	3·2
1992-93	9·5	3·2
[1]1993-94	9·8	3·2
[1]1994-95	10·1	3·2

The Department does not fund *(a)* the Central Science Laboratory *(b)* the Veterinary Medicines Directorate, *(c)* the Central Veterinary Laboratory and *(d)* ADAS.
Notes:
[1]Projected, 3 per cent. inflation assumed for re-pricing.
[2]Correct using the retail price index.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people were employed, for each year since 1978, directly by the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture on research and development programmes related to agriculture, fisheries and food; and how many people were employed, for each year since 1978 on Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture research and development programmes commissioned from outside.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Cash Limits

Mr. Molyneaux: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the 1993-94 running cost limit for the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland departments.

Mr. Mates: The running cost limit for 1993-94 for the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland departments is £723,455,000. Details of the provision for individual Northern Ireland departments are set out in the Northern Ireland estimates which were laid before the House yesterday.

WALES

Mortgage Assistance

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish figures showing numbers claiming income support for mortgage interest according to household type in Wales, indicating *(a)* the number of claimants and *(b)* percentage of all claiming households that were (i) pensioners of over 80 years, (ii) pensioners between 60 and 80 years of age, (iii) households entitled to disability premiums, (iv) households entitled to lone-parent premium and (v) unemployed households for each year from 1988.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Estimates of the number of claimants of income support who have mortgage interest considered in their assessment are shown in the table. These estimates are obtained from the income support statistics annual inquiries which is a sample of one in 100 claimants in May and are subject to sampling variability. Figures for 1988 are not readily available.

Claimants of income support for mortgage interest

	Year[1]			
	1989	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Total claimants (rounded to nearest thousand)	22,000	26,000	27,000	34,000
Percentage that were:[2]				
Pensioners over 80	3·6	6·7	3·0	3·9
Pensioners between 60 and 80	22·3	27·8	19·6	16·3
Households entitled to disability premiums	15·6	16·8	19·3	22·6
Households entitled to lone-parent premiums[3]	21·0	20·0	21·5	21·1
Unemployed[4]	27·7	19·2	27·4	30·0

[1] At May.
[2] The percentages shown do not add to 100 as the breakdown given excludes the "others" category.
[3] Excluding those who are also entitled to a disability premium.
[4] All claimants under 60 who have to sign on as available for work.
Source: Income Support Statistics Annual Enquiries (Department of Social Security).

Departmental Buildings

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the buildings currently owned or rented by his Department, together with *(a)* the estimated value, *(b)* the annual rent and *(c)* the annual maintenance cost of each building in the current financial year.

Mr. Redwood: Buildings occupied for Welsh Office's own use on the civil estate are all rented from Property Holdings or other departments. Excluding executive agencies, these are given in the following list with available information on costs for the financial year 1993-94. The Welsh Office is advised by Property Holdings that information on up-to-date values of buildings could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Buildings	*Rent*	*[1]Works Services Charges*	*[2]Works Services*
	£	£	£
Gwydyr House, London	182,525	33,345	—
Crown Buildings, Cathays Park, Cardiff	1,698,571	715,776	—
Government Buildings, Gabalfa, Cardiff	20,206	11,457	—
Government Buildings, Llanishen, Cardiff	505,293	145,584	—
Government Buildings, Lampeter	7,596	6,376	—
Government Buildings, Colwyn Bay	28,409	18,404	—
Government Buildings, Ruthin	11,140	21,977	—
Williamson House, Cardiff	26,463	6,610	—
Penllwyn, Haverfordwest	3,552	6,799	—
Hamilton Terrace, Milford Haven	1,934	2,338	—
Crown Buildings, Dolgellau	9,550	9,587	—
Crown Buildings, Picton Tce, Carmarthen	94,063	45,983	—
Crown Buildings, Penrallt, Caernarfon	68,446	46,920	—
Caradog House, Cardiff	45,037	17,024	—
Former Council Offices, Ruthin	1,316	883	—
Ty Nant, Swansea	5,169	2,628	—
Crown Buildings, Spa Road East, Llandrindod Wells	88,260	47,725	—
Golate House, Cardiff	66,774	16,112	—
Afon House, Newtown	8,847	3,647	—
Crown Buildings, Canal Road, Brecon	4,220	3,886	—
Wholesale Fruit Centre, Bessemer Road, Cardiff	628	354	—
John Williams, Cardiff	96,516	72,966	—
Crosswood Park, Trawgoed, Aberystwyth	76,792	72,384	—
Buarth Road, Aberystwyth	25,176	15,534	—
Jobswell Lane, Carmarthen	23,520	21,775	—
Royal Welsh Show Ground, Builth Wells	1,298	4,791	—
Bryn Road, Bangor	1,387	1,859	—
Companies House, Cardiff	213,566	94,143	—
Brecon House, Pontypool	612	192	—
	3,316,866	1,447,060	625,000

[1] The amount paid to Property Holdings and departments for works services, including maintenance, for which they have executive responsibility.
[2] Estimated total expenditure to be incurred on works services, including maintenance, for which the Welsh Office has executive responsibility (an estimate of cost for each building is not readily available).

Agricultural Research and Development

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what funds, in cash and constant prices, were allocated to his Department's research and development budget for each year since 1978; what is the projected spending for 1993-94 and 1994-95; and what proportion of the departmental budget for research and development is accounted for by *(a)* the Central Science Laboratory, *(b)* the Veterinary Medicines Directorate, *(c)* the Central Veterinary Laboratory and *(d)* ADAS.

Mr. Redwood: The Department does not have a single research budget, but funds are made available to support research and development programmes administered by various divisions within the Department. The totals for the years in question are as follows:

	£ million cash	*£ million constant prices[1]*
1978-79	0·8	2·0
1979-80	1·1	2·4
1980-81	1·1	2·0
1981-82	1·6	2·7
1982-83	1·5	2·3
1983-84	1·3	1·9
1984-85	1·6	2·3

	£ million cash	*£ million constant prices*[1]
1985-86	2·6	3·5
1986-87	3·5	4·6
1987-88	1·9	2·4
1988-89	1·9	2·2
1989-90	2·4	2·6
1990-91	3·0	3·0
1991-92	3·6	[2]3·3
1992-93	4·6	[3]4·1
1993-94	4·1	[4]3·5
1994-95	4·0	[4]3·4

[1] Base year is 1990-91.
[2] Estimate.
[3] Provision.
[4] Plans.

The cash figures for 1981-82 and preceding years were published in "Economic Trends" No. 359 page 114, September 1983. The figures for 1982-83 and subsequent years were published in "R and D 92"—tables 2.3.1 and 2.3.2—published by the Office of Science and Technology.

Funding for agricultural research and development relating to Wales and England is the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. The Welsh Office Agriculture Department produces and sends to MAFF an annual strategy document setting out research and development priorities for agriculture in Wales, and discusses research and development programmes for individual sectors in detail with MAFF before they are implemented. It does not, however, fund direct research and development programmes itself.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people were employed, for each year since 1978, directly by the Welsh Department of Agriculture on research and development programmes related to agriculture, fisheries and food; and how many people were employed, for each year since 1978, on Welsh Department of Agriculture research and development programmes commissioned from outside.

Mr. Redwood: Funding for agricultural research and development relating to Wales and England is the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. The Welsh Office Agriculture Department produces and sends to MAFF an annual strategy document setting out research and development priorities for agriculture in Wales, and discusses research and development programmes for individual sectors in detail with MAFF before they are implemented. It does not however employ people, either directly or on commission, to carry out research programmes.

Badger Setts

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 30 March, *Official Report*, columns *140-41*, on licences for the entry of dogs into badger setts, what other methods of fox control were tried; and how successful they were.

Mr. Redwood: Before submitting the application for a licence, the applicant had attempted to deal with the problem by other means including the use of snares and night shooting but with only limited success. This was taken into account in determining the application.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 30 March, *Official Report*, columns *140-41*, on entry of dogs into badger setts, whether ADAS visited the site prior to the licence being issued.

Mr. John Redwood: Yes. ADAS was also present when the licensed activity took place and has made two subsequent visits to the site which indicate that there has been no adverse effect on the local badger population.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 30 March, *Official Report*, columns *140-41*, on entry of dogs into badger setts, what were the permitted methods of interference under the conditions of the licence; how many dogs were permitted to be used; and what precautions were taken to ensure that there were no badgers present before dogs were entered.

Mr. Redwood: The licence conditions enabled one dog to be entered into a part of the sett considered by ADAS wildlife experts to have been previously abandoned by badgers.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 30 March, *Official Report*, columns *140-41*, on licences for the entry of dogs into badger setts, what was the nature of the alleged problem with foxes in the area; how many foxes were involved; what claims the licence applicant made about lamb losses; and what evidence is available concerning the responsibility of foxes for lamb losses.

Mr. Redwood: Thirteen lambs had been killed over a period of 10 days. Although it was clear from description of the damage that foxes were responsible, it was not possible to determine how many foxes were involved.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he is to take to protect the interests of local government staff in the run-up to local government reorganisation in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: In the White Paper on local government reorganisation, "Local Government in Wales: A Charter For The Future", my predecessor announced his intention to establish a staff commission to help safeguard staff interests during the reorganisation process. I am committed to this. I plan to establish the shadow commission after Second Reading of the Local Government Bill. The staff commission will be formally established once the Bill receives Royal Assent.

It is essential that the implications of reorganisation for existing local government staff are considered at an early stage and I have decided to establish an advisory committee to consider the advice and guidance that will need to be given to the staff commission and, where appropriate, to issue advice on specific issues which need to be addressed in advance of the establishment of the commission.

The advisory committee will consist of a chairman and up to three other members. I am currently considering candidates and will be announcing the appointments shortly. Financial provision for the advisory committee is included in the cash limit increase for class XV, vote 9 announced today. The relevant supplementary estimate is subject to parliamentary approval.

Cash Limits

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what changes he proposes to make to the cash limits for his Department in the current financial year.

Mr. Redwood: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary revised and supplementary estimates, the cash limit on class XV, vote 2 will be reduced by £750,000 from £170,030,000 to £169,280,000; the cash limit on class XV, vote 4 will be increased by £4,576,000 from £146,740,000 to £151,316,000; the cash limit on class XV, vote 5 will be increased by £502,000 from £786,996,000 to £787,498,000; and the cash limit on class XV, vote 9 will be increased by £921,000 from £64,362,000 to £65,283,000. The running costs limit for the Department will be increased by £880,000 from £76,486,000 to £77,366,000.

The reduction in the cash limit of vote 2 is in respect of a transfer of £750,000 to vote 9 to provide for the running costs implications of the measures accompanying the reform of the common agricultural policy.

The increase of £4,576,000 for vote 4 comprises *(a)* £378,000 in respect of extra provision for business and enterprise support, *(b)* £660,000 in respect of additional resources for areas affected by coal closures, *(c)* £960,000 in respect of the new TEC Challenge Wales programme, *(d)* £2,474,000 in respect of the new learning for work programme and *(e)* £104,000 in respect of payments to the Department of Employment for employment services. With the exception of item *(b)*, these increases form part of the special package of training measures announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget speech on 16 March.

The increase of £502,000 for vote 5 represents a transfer from the Home Office in respect of capital provision for juvenile remand accommodation.

The increase of £921,000 for vote 9 comprises: *(a)* a transfer of £750,000 from vote 2, *(b)* a transfer of £90,000 from class VII, vote 11, *(c)* extra provision of £40,000 for the Local Government Staff Commission—advisory body —and *(d)* extra provision of £41,000 for other current expenditure. Items *(a)*, *(b)* and *(c)* also represent increases to the running costs limit for the Welsh Office.

None of these proposed changes will add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Grants for Education Support and Training

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each of the last three years, the local education authorities which have not been able to take up GEST funding offered to them; for what purposes the unused funding was originally made available; and what it was used for subsequently.

Sir Wyn Roberts *[holding answer 28 May 1993]:* The GEST allocations in 1990-91 and 1991-92 and final expenditure for each local education authority are shown in the tables. Final expenditure information in respect of the 1992-93 GEST programme is not yet available.

The purposes for which grant was approved are set out in Welsh Office circulars 45/89 and 58/89 for 1990-91, 47/90 for 1991-92 and 36/91 for 1992-93. The reasons for underspends varied significantly between local education authorities, under the flexible arrangements for virement within GEST which are approved each year. Some underspends were reallocated to other authorities.

Authority	*Allocation (£000s)*	*Final Spend (£000s)*	*Percentage over/ (under) spend against original allocation*
1990-91			
Clwyd	3,047	2,986	(2·8)
Dyfed	2,793	2,902	3·9
Gwent	3,575	3,526	(1·4)
Gwynedd	1,980	1,960	(1·0)
Mid Glamorgan	4,456	4,402	(1·2)
Powys	1,280	1,283	0·2
South Glamorgan	3,193	3,252	1·9
West Glamorgan	2,955	2,830	(4·2)
Total	23,278	23,141	(0·6)
1991-92			
Clwyd	3,910	3,420	(12·5)
Dyfed	2,898	2,839	(2·1)
Gwent	3,677	3,649	(0·8)
Gwynedd	2,197	2,162	(1·6)
Mid Glamorgan	4,559	4,514	(1·0)
Powys	1,458	1,417	(2·8)
South Glamorgan	3,276	3,241	(1·1)
West Glamorgan	3,029	2,830	(6·6)
Total	25,004	24,071	(3·7)
1992-93			
Clwyd	4,063	n.a.	n.a.
Dyfed	3,344	n.a.	n.a.
Gwent	4,386	n.a.	n.a.
Gwynedd	2,351	n.a.	n.a.
Mid Glamorgan	5,389	n.a.	n.a.
Powys	1,726	n.a.	n.a.
South Glamorgan	3,597	n.a.	n.a.
West Glamorgan	3,312	n.a.	n.a.

Authority	Allocation (£000s)	Final Spend (£000s)	Percentage over/ (under) spend against original allocation
Total	28,168	n.a.	n.a.

Notes:
1. Figures may not add back to totals due to rounding.
2. The above information is based on returns made by the Local Education Authorities.
3. LEA grant claims for reimbursement of programme expenditure overlap financial years. Any programme underspend is taken into account in developing and resourcing the following year's programme; the underspends for 1990-91 and 1991-92 were used for this purpose.

SCOTLAND

KS Construction Ltd.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is now in a position to make a final statement on the moneys loaned by the Scottish Development Agency to KS Construction Ltd.

Mr. Stewart: This matter is still under consideration.

Football Stadiums

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the report of the Scottish Stadia Committee regarding the implementation of the Taylor report.

Sir Hector Monro: No. The report is the property of the Scottish Stadia Committee and any decision to publish the contents of the report rests with that body.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the level of preparedness of each football club in the premier, first and second divisions for complying with the Taylor committee requirement for all-seated stadia by August 1994.

Sir Hector Monro: My right hon. Friend announced in September last year his decision that, following our review of the Taylor report requirements, only clubs in the premier division of the Scottish football league should be subject to the requirements for all-seated stadia within the prescribed timetable. I wrote on 22 April this year to the chairman of the Scottish Stadia Committee reinforcing our continued resolve on implementation of Taylor in respect of those clubs and confirming the target dates for individual clubs by which all-seated work should be completed.

Relocation and Amalgamations

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the sections and organisations within his Department for which there are plans for relocation or amalgamation.

Mr. Lang: The organisation of my Department, including amalgamations of sections, is kept under continuous review. As to relocation, the Government indicated in "Scotland in the Union: A Partnership for Good" (Cm 2225) that we are committed to seeking opportunities to relocate units of the Scottish Office where it is operationally and financially appropriate to do so.

Departmental Buildings

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the buildings currently owned or rented by his Department, together with *(a)* the estimated value, *(b)* the annual rent and *(c)* the annual maintenance cost of each building in the current financial year.

Mr. Lang: An up-to-date capital valuation of the Scottish Office's departmental estate is not available. The annual rental bill for the Scottish Office's departmental estate for 1993-94 is £370,572·73. Details of individual rentals are commercially sensitive. Maintenance responsibility is shared between my Department and Property Holdings, but my Department's maintenance costs for 1993-94, which also cover our responsibilities for buildings on the common user estate occupied by my Department, are estimated to be £2·427 million.

Electoral Rolls

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total parliamentary electorate of, respectively, Renfrewshire and Strathclyde.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The total parliamentary electorate for Strathclyde in the 1993 electoral registers is 1,740,266. There is no comparable figure available for the former county of Renfrewshire because its area now forms part of several parliamentary constituencies.

Smoke Alarms

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to make it his policy that mains-operated smoke alarms are fitted in all new publicly owned and privately owned dwellings and buildings; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have today signed the statutory instrument amending the Building Standards (Scotland) Regulations 1990 to make the fitting of mains-operated smoke alarms mandatory in all new dwellings from 23 July 1993.

In hotels and boarding houses designated under the Fire Precautions Act 1971, automatic fire detection equipment is a requirement of the fire certificate. As regards other buildings to which fire certificate arrangements under the same Act apply, depending on risk and occupancy factors, automatic fire detection systems may similarly be installed.

Quangos

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the average percentage increase in allowances, salary or honoraria

payable to members of *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* health boards, *(c)* Scottish Homes or its predecessor and *(d)* other quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations to which he appoints in each year since 1974; what other types of payment are made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* The rates of allowances paid to local authority members are reviewed on a regular basis. Details of the allowances paid to individual local authority members are not held centrally as each authority decides on its own arrangements within the requirements of the Local Authorities Etc (Allowances) (Scotland) Regulations 1991, as amended. Information about salaries and fees for members of non-departmental public bodies, including health boards and Scottish Homes and its predecessor bodies, for the period from 1982 is published annually in "Public Bodies", copies of which are in the Library of the House. The other information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the cost to date and the expected future cost of his Department's market-testing programme; how many staff are engaged full time in work relating to market testing; which firms of consultants have been used in connection with the market-testing programme; and how they were selected.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* With regard to the cost of the market-testing programme and staff committed to implementing the programme, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) on 17 February 1993, at column *169*. In the first four months of 1993 the expenditure on market testing, including staff costs and fees for consultancy work, is estimated at £370,000. It is not possible to give an accurate forecast of future costs; this will depend on the outcome of detailed scoping work, yet to be completed, and upon the level of internal and consultancy effort needed to complete the programme. The consultants Coopers and Lybrand, Deloitte advised my Department on the initial scoping exercise to identify possible activities for the 1992-93 market-testing programme and Capita Management Consultancy are assisting in its implementation in the Scottish Office. Both firms of consultants were selected following competitive tendering.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Arable Area Payments

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what checks his staff are making to ensure that farmers submitting claims for arable area payment under the integrated administration and control system are complying with the requirement set out in paragraph 129 of the advisory booklet to exclude from their claim land crossed by public footpaths and bridleways.

Mr. Jack: Farmers are required to provide certain information under the IACS. The arrangements under the IACS for dealing with uncropped or grazed land is outlined in paragraph 129 of the explanatory booklet. The information supplied will be subject to administrative checks which may be backed up by the use of field checks.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what conclusions were reached at the May EC Council of Agriculture Ministers, in relation to the CAP budget for 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The agreement on the CAP price-fixing reached at the May Council of Agriculture Ministers will add 137 mecu—£108 million[1]—to the costs of the CAP in 1993 and 146 mecu—£114 million[2]—in 1994. The increase in set-aside payments will add some 350 mecu—£274 million[2]—from 1995. The latest estimate of expenditure for 1993 is around 35·5 becu—£28·1 billion[1]—some 1 becu—£0·8 billion[1]—below the agricultural guideline, the legally binding ceiling on agricultural expenditure. For 1994, the Commission has adopted a preliminary draft budget at the level of the guideline, 36·5 becu—£28·6 billion[2]. Part of the agrimonetary costs arising from ERM realignments since last September may be funded in line with the conclusions of the Edinburgh European Council. The Commission confirmed that, on this basis, expenditure will be kept within the guideline in 1994. Decisions on the level of the 1995 budget will be taken next year.

[1] £1 = 1·2617 ecu.
[2] £1 = 1·2766 ecu.

Board for the Encouragement of Agriculture and Internal Improvement

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what activities she is proposing to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the Board for the Encouragement of Agriculture and Internal Improvement and the publication of the county reports.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: None; the board was not really a Government Department, and I understand that its true successor was the Royal Agricultural Society of England —RASE. Furthermore, the Department celebrated in 1989 the much more significant centenary of the establishment of the Board of Agriculture, which coincided with the 150th anniversary of the founding of the RASE.

Research and Development

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many people were employed, for each year since 1978, directly by his Department on research and development programmes related to agriculture, fisheries and food; and how many people were employed, for each year since 1978, on research and development programmes commissioned from outside.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Details of the number of people engaged by my Department on R and D can be found in table 2.5.1 on page 44 of the "Annual Review of Government Funded Research and Development 1992", a copy of which has been placed in the library of the House. Information is not available on the number of people employed on externally commissioned R and D.

Set-aside Land

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is her best estimate of the area likely to be the subject of set-aside provisions in each EC member state in 1993-94; and what proportion of this area is likely to be rotational in each state.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) on 14 December 1992, at column *70*. It will not be possible to provide more reliable estimates until we know how much land has been set aside in individual member states in 1992-93 and what detailed arrangements will apply to non-rotational set-aside and to the incorporation of linseed in the arable area payments scheme.

Farmed Salmon

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions have been held or are to be held with the Norwegian Government concerning the United Kingdom salmon farming industry's initiative for the formation of producer organisations in the EC.

Sir Hector Monro: I have been asked to reply.

Officials of the Scottish Office visited Norway on 9 to 11 May for discussions with various interests there, including the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Fisheries, about the prospects for the European salmon market.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions have been held with the European Commission to secure stability in the farmed salmon market in the Community.

Sir Hector Monro: I have been asked to reply.

There have been a number of discussions between officials of the fisheries departments and the EC Commission services over the past year about various aspects of the salmon market.

DEFENCE

HMS Sovereign

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what time scale he has for the return to service of HMS Sovereign; of what other vessels the officer in command of HMS Sovereign is also in command; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: HMS Sovereign is expected to return to service in 1995. The refitting officer in command of HMS Sovereign is also in command of HMS Revenge while she, too, is in refit.

Nuclear Submarines (Commanding Officers)

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy on appointing an officer to be in command of more than one nuclear-powered submarine while in refit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: In each yard it is established practice to appoint a commander (submarines) as the senior officer submarines (refitting) who carries out the duties of commanding officer of all submarines in deep refit in that yard until commanding officers are appointed to individual submarines as they near completion.

The duties of the senior officer submarines (refitting) are primarily to command the refit crews and ensure reactor safety of those submarines which are in deep refit. The appointment of one officer to command all submarines in deep refit in that yard is considered and proven to be entirely appropriate.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 8 June.

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 8 June.

The Prime Minister: This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Ghazanfer Ali

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 22 April, *Official Report*, column *195*, what further information he has received concerning Ghazanfer Ali and the progress of his case; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 27 May 1993]:* The two murder cases involving Mr. Ghazanfer Ali which opened on 13 and 14 March have been further adjourned until 13 and 29 June respectively. We understand from one of Mr. Ghazanfer Ali's lawyers that no evidence has yet been heard in the case. We understand that the court was ready to record the statement of the respondent at a hearing on 6 June, but witnesses failed to appear in court.

Iraq (Children)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what response he has given to the report sent to him by Dr. Eric Hoskins, Oxford epidemiologist, commissioned by UNICEF on the children of Iraq.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* Dr. Hoskins's report contains disturbing information about the suffering in Iraq. It reinforces our view that the responsibility for this lies with the Government of Iraq rather than with UN sanctions regime. Baghdad has imposed an internal economic blockade on northern Iraq, and has refused to implement the mechanisms provided under UN Security Council resolutions 706 and 712 for using the proceeds of oil sales for humanitarian needs, such as food and medicines, which are not covered by sanctions.

EMPLOYMENT

Equal Pay Claims

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many applications were made to United Kingdom industrial tribunals for each year since 1979; how many of those applications involved claims for equal pay for work of equal value; how many separate employers were involved in each year; how many

employees were involved in each year; how many of those employees were women; and how many cases were successful.

Miss Widdecombe: The available information, which relates to Great Britain, is set out in the table. The number of employees is the same as the number of applications. I regret that figures for the number of separate employers and the number of women applicants are not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost. The majority of applications disposed of do not reach an industrial tribunal hearing, being settled under the auspices of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service or withdrawn.

	1 Applications registered All jurisdictions	*2 Applications registered Equal Pay Act*[1]	*3 Successful applications Equal Pay Act*[1]
1979	41,244	191	n/a
1980	41,424	81	n/a
1981	44,852	92	n/a
1982	43,660	788	n/a
1983	39,959	1,258	n/a
1984-85	39,191	350	n/a
1985-86	38,593	1,708	37
1986-87	38,385	612	44
1987-88	30,543	1,823	7
1988-89	29,304	583	14
1989-90	34,697	1,195	33
1990-91	43,243	612	10
1991-92	67,448	887	[2]5
1992-93	71,821	707	n/a

[1] The statistics for applications under the Equal Pay Act cover all applications under this Act, not only those involving equal value cases. They are in financial years after 1983.
[2] Provisional.

Palace of Westminster

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will bring forward legislative proposals to bring the Palace of Westminster under the protection of the health and safety at work enactments; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: During recent discussions with the Health and Safety Executive the Palace authorities have agreed in principle to the extension of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 to the Palace of Westminster. This will be implemented as soon as a suitable legislative vehicle becomes available.

In the meantime, there is no suggestion that standards of health and safety at the Palace of Westminster are inferior to those of other employers. Under the current arrangements, the HSE inspects the Palace of Westminster at the invitation of the Palace authorities.

Long-term Unemployment

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what further steps she proposes to reduce the numbers of long-term unemployed.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: At the time of the Budget, a number of new programmes were announced which are aimed at helping long-term unemployed people, and which will start in the summer. They comprise:

Community Action which will provide 60,000 opportunities for people unemployed over 12 months to do voluntary work of benefit to the community, while looking for work.

Learning for Work which will provide 30,000 opportunities for people unemployed over 12 months to pursue vocationally relevant full-time education to enhance their skills and career prospects.

Workstart pilots which will test the effectiveness of giving employers a financial incentive to employ people who have been unemployed for a minimum of two years.

A TEC Challenge Fund which will support imaginative ideas to help unemployed people into work.

10,000 further opportunities on the Business Start-Up scheme in addition to the 40,000 which already exist to encourage unemployed people to set up their own businesses.

These are in addition to existing programmes which already provide extensive opportunities for long-term unemployed people, including:

Training for Work, offering 320,000 opportunities for skills training, work experience or shorter work preparation courses.

Jobplan Workshops and Restart courses offering a total of 410,000 opportunities for unemployed people to assess their employment prospects and skills and to rebuild their self-confidence.

Jobclubs offering practical advice and help to 295,000 long-term unemployed people who are looking for work.

Job Interview Guarantee offering 300,000 opportunities to unemployed people to acquire training in self-presentation or work trials followed by a guaranteed interview with an employer with suitable vacancies.

Retail Sectors

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will set out *(a)* the average hours worked per week and *(b)* the average gross wage for (i) full-time and (ii) part-time workers in the retail sector.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested for full-time employees is published in table X2.5 of part A of the 1992 new earnings survey. A copy is available in the Library.

In April 1992, the average weekly hours of part-time workers in retail distribution were 18·2 and their average gross weekly earnings were £68·60.

Redundancies

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals her Department has to introduce regulations which would penalise employers for failing to consult with trade unions prior to announcing redundancies.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Such penalties already exist. Any recognised trade union which considers that the statutory consultation requirements contained in chapter II of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 have been breached may complain to an industrial tribunal. The tribunal may make a protective award to the employees affected. The Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill contains a provision that such awards may no longer be offset against wages paid to the employees.

Relocation and Amalgamations

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the sections and organisations within her Department for which there are plans for relocation or amalgamation.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Employment Department's relocation programme to Runcorn and Sheffield is now complete. There are no present plans for further relocation or amalgamation.

A. H. Marks Ltd.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will call for a report by the Health and Safety Executive on the likely consequences of the removal of any buffer zone round A. H. Marks Ltd. of Wyke in Bradford, South and its replacement with industrial development.

Miss Widdecombe: The Health and Safety Executive has no plans to remove the consultation distance of "buffer zone" around A. H. Marks and Co. Ltd.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest estimates from the labour force survey for each standard United Kingdom region of the number and percentage of *(a)* all males, *(b)* all adults over 50 years and *(c)* all males between 50 and 65 years, who are recorded as economically inactive.

Miss Widdecombe: The available information from the labour force survey is given in the table:

Economically inactive persons (not seasonally adjusted)

Region	*Men aged 16+*	*As percentage of all men 16+*	*All persons aged 50+*	*As percentage of all men aged 50+*	*Men aged 50-64*	*As percentage of all men 50-64*
	Number (thousands)	*Percentage*	*Number (thousands)*	*Percentage*	*Number (thousands)*	*Percentage*
Autumn 1992						
Great Britain	5,630	26·5	11,462	66·7	1,125	26·6
South East	1,609	24·2	3,305	63·3	266	20·7
Greater London	650	25·4	1,209	63·6	107	22·4
Rest of South East	959	23·4	2,096	63·2	159	19·6
East Anglia	202	25·3	438	66·0	29	18·6
South West	489	27·2	1,054	66·8	86	24·2
West Midlands	522	25·9	1,044	65·5	104	25·3
East Midlands	404	25·8	804	65·2	75	24·4
Yorkshire and Humberside	509	27·0	1,043	68·5	109	28·8
North West	685	28·5	1,346	69·7	156	32·3
North	343	29·4	694	72·2	92	38·1
Wales	356	32·4	683	73·3	88	39·4
Scotland	511	26·8	1,049	68·1	120	31·4
Spring 1992						
United Kingdom	5,733	26·3	11,611	66·3	1,122	26·0
Northern Ireland	154	27·8	269	67·0	30	29·4

Source: Labour Force Survey.
Note: The Labour Force Survey is only carried out in Northern Ireland in spring each year.

EC Employment Council

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on matters discussed and decisions taken at the European Employment Council in Luxembourg on 1 June; and what proposals were put forward by the United Kingdom to the Council.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) on 7 June regarding the outcome of the EC Social Affairs Council held on 1 June.

Newspapers

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many people are directly employed by the national newspaper industry;

(2) how many people are directly employed in the newspaper publishing industry in Scotland;

(3) how many people are directly employed by the newspaper publishing industry in Wales;

(4) how many people are directly employed by the newspaper publishing industry in Northern Ireland.

Miss Widdecombe: The latest available information on regional employment for the newspaper publishing industry[1] is from the 1991 census of employment. The estimated number of employees in employment at September 1991 were as follows:

	Number
Great Britain	76,700
Scotland	7,900
Wales	3,000
Northern Ireland[2]	1,700

[1] Activity heading 4751 of the Standard Industrial Classification 1980.
[2] Figure supplied by the Department of Economic Development, Northern Ireland.

Manufacturing Jobs

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many manufacturing jobs there were in each region at December each year since 1979; and what proportion of the regional total number of jobs they represented.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The available information can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Fishermen (Redundancies)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many fishermen have received redundancy payments since 1973; what was the average amount paid to each; how many were paid directly by his Department; and what was the average amount paid.

Miss Widdecombe: Information is not available for payments made by employers or, in the case of departmental payments, by individual occupation.

Cash Limits

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what changes will be made to the cash limits or running costs limits of his Department for 1993-94.

Mr. David Hunt: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, the following changes will be made:

- the cash limit for Class V, Vote 1—Employment Department: programmes and central services—will be increased by £60,647,000 from £2,438,620,000 to £2,499,267,000;
- the cash limit for Class V, Vote 2—Employment Department: Employment Service—will be increased by £35,562,000 from £603,00o7,00 to £638,569,000;
- the single running cost limit for the Employment Department—Class V, Votes 1 and 2 will be increased by £8,392,000 from £1,439,658,000 to £1,448,050,000.

The cash limit increases on class V, votes 1 and 2 are mainly the effect of the increased provision to fund the new employment measures announced by the then Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget statement to the House of Commons on 16 March 1993. The running cost limit increase is mainly to cover administration expenditure on the new measures.

The increase will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Workstart

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how he intends to fund workstart and community action programmes announced in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget statement on 16 March.

Mr.Michael Forsyth: In his Budget statement, my right hon. Friend the previous Chancellor announced a new package of employment measures.

The aim of the community action programme is to help long-term unemployed people back into work by providing opportunities for them to do part-time voluntary work of benefit to the community combined with active job search. Participants will continue to receive an allowance equivalent to their benefit plus £10.

The aim of the workstart scheme is to help the long-term unemployed people back into work by paying a temporary employment subsidy to employers for a year. The scheme will be piloted with 1,000 places between four locations, two of which will be run by training and enterprise councils and two run by the Employment Service.

Parliamentary approval for these new services will be sought in supplementary estimates for the Employment Department's programmes and central services vote—class V, vote 1—for workstart pilots provided by training and enterprise councils; and for the Employment Department's Employment Service vote—class V, vote 2—for workstart pilots and community action. Pending that approval, the following urgent expenditure estimated will be met by repayable advances from the Contingencies Fund:

	£
Workstart (Class V, Vote 1)	3,000
Workstart (Class V, Vote 2)	7,000
Community Action (Class V, Vote 2)	200,000

Disabled People

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many disabled people under the age of 25 years are currently unemployed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* The labour survey—LFS—asks people of working age if they currently have any health problem or disability which limits the kind of paid work they can do. Estimates based on answers to this question will include people with short-term health problems and disabilities as well as those registered as disabled.

LFS estimates for autumn 1992, not seasonally adjusted, show that in Great Britain there were 105,000 people aged 16 to 24 with all such health problems or disabilities who were unemployed on the International Labour Organisation definition.

HEALTH

AIDS

12. **Mr. Hanson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the future of funding for AIDS-related projects under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968.

Mr. Sackville: Voluntary organisations have played a crucial role in combating the epidemic in the United Kingdom and have been given substantial funds for this work—nearly £12 million to date. The Government will continue to make help available in this area while also ensuring that total funds available to voluntary bodies under section 64 continue to be distributed from year to year in accordance with developing health priorities.

Drug Abusers

14. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate she has as to the number of people aged between 10 and 18 years who have died because of drug abuse since 1979.

Dr. Mawhinney: The data are not available for the age range requested. However, from 1979 to 1991, 92 deaths were registered in the United Kingdom of people aged under 20 where the underlying cause of death was given as drug dependence or non-dependent abuse of drugs. This figure does not include deaths from alcohol, tobacco or volatile substances.

A breakdown of the figures by year is shown in the table.

Deaths of those aged under 20 with underlying cause described as drug dependence or non-dependent abuse of drugs (excluding alcohol, tobacco and volatile substances) 1979 to 1991

Year	Deaths aged under 20
1979	7
1980	4
1981	3
1982	8
1983	5
1984	8
1985	8
1986	13
1987	5
1988	5
1989	9
1990	10
1991	7
TOTAL	92

Source: OPCS, GRO(S) GRO(NI). Further details available from Home Office Bulletin "Statistics of Drug Addicts notified to the Home Office, United Kingdom".

Personal Social Services

15. **Mr. Clappison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much was available to councils for spending on personal social services in 1979; what is the amount provided for 1993-94; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: Expenditure on local authority personal social services increased by 69 per cent. in real terms between 1978-79 and 1992-93. Standard spending for personal social services in 1993-94 including the special transitional grant for community care, is £5,585 million, an increase of 15 per cent. on 1992-93.

Patients, Wessex

16. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made reducing waiting times for patients in the Wessex region.

Mr. Sackville: Latest provisional waiting time figures for 31 March 1993 show that in the two years since 31 March 1991, the number of patients waiting for more than a year in the Wessex region has fallen by more than 40 per cent. from nearly 10,000 to just over 4,000. No Wessex patient has to wait more than two years for any treatment and patients needing hip, knee or cataract surgery are treated within 18 months.

Hospital Services, Dover

17. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the provision of hospital services in the Dover area.

Mr. Sackville: The South Kent hospital unit is conducting a review of the provision of acute clinical services currently provided at William Harvey hospital, Ashford, and the Buckland hospital, Dover.

Any changes to service provision that are proposed will be subject to full public consultation.

Patients Charter

18. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the implementation of the patients charter waiting time guarantee in the North East Thames region.

Mr. Sackville: As at 31 March 1993, in North East Thames, as in all other regions, there was no one waiting more than two years for any treatment and no one waiting more than 18 months for a hip replacement or a cataract operation. Only seven patients were waiting more than 18 months for a knee replacement in North East Thames and the region is taking steps to ensure the guarantee is met in full as soon as possible.

Mr. Hawkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the implementation of the patients charter waiting time guarantee in the north-western region.

Mr. Sackville: Latest provisional waiting time figures for 31 March 1993 show that in line with the patients charter there were no patients waiting two years or more for any in-patient or day case treatment in the region. In addition, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health announced on 4 May, at 31 March 1993 there were no north-western patients waiting more than 18 months for either a hip or knee replacement or a cataract operation.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health to what extent under the patients charter commitment to providing NHS treatment to every citizen based on clinical need doctors may refuse NHS treatment without a change in the patient's lifestyle.

Mr. Sackville: The patients charter states that every citizen has the right to health care on the basis of clinical need regardless of the ability to pay. The assessment of clinical need of individual patient is a matter for the clinicians responsible for their care. In deciding what form of treatment is appropriate, clinicians will need to exercise their clinical judgment and decide the priority between different forms of treatment, having regard to the resources available.

Community Care

19. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her policy on the recording at local level of unmet community care needs.

Mr. Bowis: We have made quite clear to local authorities that they should share the results of assessments with clients and collect and record the information they need to plan to improve their services.

Infant and Perinatal Mortality

20. **Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest information about the rates of infant and perinatal mortality in the South East Thames region.

Mr. Sackville: The infant and perinatal mortality rates for the South East Thames regional health authority for 1992[1] are given in the table.

	South East Thames RHA	*Nationally*
Infant mortality rate 1,000 live births	6·4	6·6
Perinatal mortality per 1,000 total births	8·2	7·6

[1] Details supplied by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys

NHS Dental Treatment

21. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the availability of NHS dental treatment in Hampshire.

Dr. Mawhinney: In Hampshire, the proportion of patients registered with national health service dentists is above the national average and adult registrations have increased since last July.

NHS Staff

22. **Ms Jowell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many NHS staff were employed as *(a)* managers and *(b)* administrators and clerical officers in each year since 1989-90.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information available is shown in the table.

Whole-time equivalent general/senior managers and administrative and clerical staff in England at 30 September of each year

	1989	*1990*	*1991*
General/Senior Managers	4,610	9,680	13,340
Administrative and Clerical	116,840	120,040	127,370

Source: Department of Health non-Medical Workforce Census.
Notes:
1. In 1991 NHS Management accounted for less than 1·7 per cent. and Administrative and Clerical Staff for less than 16 per cent. of the total NHS workforce.
2. Some management posts are simply re-definitions and re-categorisations of jobs previously carried out by other staff groups.
3. The figures for 1991 are the latest available.

Oral Contraceptives

23. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement about the proposed inclusion of oral contraceptives in the selected list.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have asked the Advisory Committee on National Health Service Drugs to advise us on which contraceptives should remain available on NHS prescription in order to meet all real clinical needs as economically as possible.

London Ambulance Service

24. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will direct the London ambulance service to provide a transportation service separate from the vehicles used for rapid response to 999 calls.

Mr. Sackville: In April 1991, the London ambulance service—LAS—established the patient transport service. It is a separate organisation within the LAS, with dedicated control centres, management, staff and vehicles. The core service operates between 08.00 and 18.00 hours, Monday to Friday, to co-incide with the requirements of most hospitals and patients. In addition, the patient transport service operates up to 23.00 hours Monday to Friday and on Saturdays between 08.00 and 16.00 hours in areas where demand for the service warrants it. Outside these hours, patient transport is provided by the accident and emergency service, as part of the regional accident and emergency contracts. We are not aware of any evidence which would justify changing these arrangements.

Hospital Beds, Leicester

25. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people are currently waiting for a hospital bed in the city of Leicester.

Mr. Sackville: Waiting time information is collected by health authority rather than by city or town. Latest figures for 30 September 1992 show that 90 per cent. of Leicestershire district health authority patients had been waiting for less than a year.

National Health Service Spending

26. **Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the review of NHS spending.

Mr. Sackville: My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary announced the review to the House on 8 February at column *681*. The aim of this review, as with those being conducted across the other major spending programmes, is to distinguish essential costs of high priority spending, which the Government will continue to fund, from avoidable spending which they cannot afford. The review of health spending aims to ensure that taxpayers' money spent on the national health service is used as efficiently as possible for the benefit of patients, within the context of the Government's commitments to continue to offer national health service care on the basis of need, not ability to pay; to increase year by year the level of real resources committed to the national health service; and to plough back savings generated by greater efficiency.

NHS Services

27. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total amount of income raised from users of NHS services in 1992-93.

Mr. Sackville: Final accounts for 1992-93 will not be available until later this year. At spring supply, a provisional estimate of income raised from users of national health service services in 1992-93 is £1,207 million. This figure includes some elements which are raised other than from users of NHS services, but which are not identifiable separately in the accounts.

Medical Negligence

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to strengthen the complaints procedure concerning claims of negligence against the medical profession.

Mr. Sackville: We are keen to seek improvements to the way in which medical negligence claims are handled by the national health service and have set up a joint departmental/NHSS working group to that end.

Departmental Buildings

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the buildings currently owned or rented by her Department, together with *(a)* the estimated value, *(b)* the annual rent and *(c)* the annual maintenance cost of each building in the current financial year.

Mr. Sackville: The only property owned or rented by the Department is the wheelchair test centre, opened in Blackpool in August 1992. This property has not yet been valued. Similarly, the annual maintenance cost is not known. The land on which the centre was built is on a 125-year lease. The opportunity cost rent payable to Property Holdings is £42,510 per year, including VAT. All other properties occupied by this Department are on the common user estate and are owned or rented by the Property Holdings directorate of the Department of the Environment.

NHS Funding

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received from the North Western regional health authority with regard to levels of funding to maintain standards of patient care.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Family Planning

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what savings would accrue to the national health service if *(a)* special fees to doctors were not paid in connection with contraceptive provision, *(b)* the full market costs were payable for contraceptive products prescribed and *(c)* her Department ceased to fund organisations which supply free condoms and contraceptive products.

Mr. Sackville: Information is not available in the form requested. The costs incurred in providing free contraceptive services have to be weighed against the increases in the cost of health and personal social services which would occur as a result of more unplanned pregnancies. The figures given relate to England only.

The cost of item of service fees paid to general practitioners for the provision of contraceptive services to women was £45·425 million in 1992-93.

The available information regarding the cost of contraceptive products prescribed relates to the net ingredient cost of contraceptive drugs and appliance prescriptions dispensed by retail pharmacists and appliance contractors, dispensing doctors and prescriptions submitted for items personally administered. In 1992 this cost was estimated at £44·580 million.

The cost to district health authorities and national health service trusts of providing national health service family planning services in 1991-92 was estimated at £40 million.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her estimate of the percentage of *(a)* general practitioners and *(b)* family planning clinics that provide condoms for patients.

Mr. Sackville: Although detailed information is not available centrally, the supply of condoms is generally part of the comprehensive service available from family planning clinics. It is for district health authorities to decide on what arrangements to make to supply condoms through general practitioners.

Infectious Diseases

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the prevalance of infectious diseases associated with poor water supply and sewage disposal.

Mr. Sackville: The incidence of infectious disease is constantly monitored.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the infectious diseases preventable by use of condoms; and what was the cost to the national health service of treating patients with each of these diseases in the last available year, and the number of patients in each case.

Mr. Sackville: Provisional figures for 1991-92 of new cases seen at national health service genito urinary medicine—GUM—clinics in England will be placed in the Library. Specific information on the cost to the national health service of treating people with sexually transmitted diseases is not available centrally. However, the annual financial returns of health authorities and national health service trusts in England for 1991-92 indicate that total expenditure on the GUM specialty which was attributable to out-patients amounted to some £70 million.

Condoms properly used do have an important role in family planning and in helping prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV infection. However, not all sexually transmitted diseases—for example, candidasis, bacterial vaginosis, lice, etc.—can be prevented by the use of a condom. The Government are committed to reducing the number of cases of sexually transmitted disease and have set a target in "The Health of the Nation" of a 20 per cent. reduction in gonorrhoea in men and women aged 15 to 64 by 1995.

Homelessness

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) of 24 May, *Official Report*, column *444*, if she will list the names and locations of the 30 projects designed to improve access to primary health care for homeless people; what are the current and projected levels of funding her Department is committing to each of these projects; and what assessment has been made of the level of homelessness in the areas covered.

Mr. Bowis: There are 29 distinct primary health care projects for homeless people, with one, in Sheffield, having within it a separately identified and separately costed scheme for travellers. The projects have developed in three phases. The third phase was initiated in December 1991 when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced that £3 million was being made available, over three years, to support new and existing projects. Not all the projects approved in the third phase, which started in 1992-93, were able to start during the financial year; others began towards the end of the year and received only a small amount of funding. The level of funding for most

projects in 1993-94 is still under discussion. Information on funding in 1992-93 and 1993-94, where agreed, is shown in the table.

When regional health authorities were invited to bid for funding, they were asked to review the existing services for homeless people in their areas, to distinguish between different types of homeless people —for example, people sleeping rough in shelters and hostels and families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation—to review existing health care facilities and consider whether these should be better publicised. With this information, family health services authorities were able to identify gaps in the services they provided and develop proposals for closing them.

Regional health authorities were asked to submit bids in order of preference. FHSAs have been asked to provide reports on each project at six monthly intervals describing progress made and setting out expenditure incurred.

Primary health care projects for homeless people
Funding

Region	*FHSA*	*Scheme*	*1992-93* £	*1993-94* £
East Anglia	Cambridge	Cambridge[1]	—	
		Peterborough[1]	—	
Mersey	Liverpool	Toxteth	16,000	
	St. Helens	Fazakerley	8,000	
Northern	Durham	Durham	6,000	
	Newcastle	Newcastle	5,000	35,000
North East Thames	Camden and Islington	Camden	[2]—	
	City and East London	City	[2]—	
North West Thames	Brent and Harrow	Cricklewood	4,000	
	Ealing/Hammersmith/Hounslow	Ealing	38,000	
	Ealing/Hammersmith/Hounslow	Hammersmith	14,000	
	Kensington/Chelsea/Westminster	Covent Garden	27,000	
North Western	Lancashire	Preston	17,000	
Oxford	Buckinghamshire	Milton Keynes	19,000	
	Oxfordshire	Oxford	26,000	
South East Thames	East Sussex	Brighton	23,000	
	Kent	Maidstone	10,000	35,000
	Lambeth/Southwark/Lewisham	Lambeth	153,000	
South West Thames	Croydon	Croydon	12,000	37,000
South Western	Avon	Bristol	45,000	
	Gloucestershire	Gloucester	15,000	29,000
Trent	Nottinghamshire	Nottingham	1,000	
	Sheffield	Sheffield	42,000	
Wessex	Hampshire	Southampton	34,000	
	Avon	Bath	7,000	
Yorkshire	Bradford	Bradford	23,000	
	Leeds	Leeds	[2]—	
	North Yorkshire	Peasholme[1]	—	
		Kirklees[1]	—	

[1] Projects approved in principle for 1993-94 funding.
[2] Funding for these projects is built into the regional health authority's baseline allocations and is not separately identified.

Unregistered Doctors

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether a doctor may work in private practice in the United Kingdom without registering with the General Medical Council; to what extent doctors struck off by the GMC may continue to practise; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The activities of doctors in the United Kingdom are regulated by the Medical Act 1983. All doctors seeking to practise medicine in this country, whether in the national health service, armed services or in private practice, must be registered with the General Medical Council.

A doctor whose name has been erased from the medical register by the General Medical Council is not permitted to continue practising medicine in this country. A doctor's registration may also have conditions imposed upon it.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what jurisdiction the General Medical Council has over unregistered doctors practising private medicine in the United Kingdom.

Dr. Mawhinney: The General Medical Council has no jurisdiction over doctors who do not obtain registration with it to practise in this country. Under section 49 of the Medical Act 1983, it is a criminal offence to pose as a registered medical practitioner and in such cases jurisdiction would rest with the courts.

Psychogeriatric Care Beds

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the availability of psychogeriatric continuing care beds for people with dementia.

Mr. Bowis: District health authorities are responsible for securing an appropriate range of locally based health services which should include provision for continuing care beds.

Cash Limits

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes she proposes to the cash limits and running costs limit of her Department in 1993-94.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary revised and supplementary estimates, the cash limit for class XII, vote 1—hospital, community health, family health services (part) and related services, England—will be reduced by £39,126,000, from £19,977,328,000 to £19,938,202,000. This reduction allows for a transfer of £35,597,000 for an increase in the national health service trusts' aggregate external financing limit; an amount of £3,657,000 to class XII, vote 3—£3,570,000 net in respect of research and development and £87,000 for the Health Education Authority for work on "The Health of the Nation". These reductions are partly offset by a transfer of £128,000 from class VII, vote 3—Department of the Environment urban aid and derelict land reclamation, England—in respect of the urban programme.

The cash limit for class XII, vote 3—Department of Health, administration, miscellaneous health services and personal social services, England—will be increased by £3,790,000—from £1,437,435,000 to £1,441,225,000. This increase will be fully offset by transfers of £3,657,000 from class XII, vote 1, as mentioned earlier; £88,000 from class XIII, vote 4—Department of Social Security, administration and miscellaneous services—£68,000 for accommodation and £20,000 for postage; £45,000 from class V, vote 1—Department of Employment: programmes and central services—concerning a grant for the Alcohol Workplace Advisory Service and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

The Department's gross running cost limit will be reduced by £6,838,000 from £259,694,000 to £252,856,000. This reflects a reallocation out of running costs of £6,926,000 in respect of the health benefit unit, offset by the effect of transfers from the Department of Social Security mentioned above.

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what changes she has for the cash limits and running costs limits for the Office of Population Censuses and Statistics for 1993-94.

Mr. Sackville: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XII, vote 6—Office of Population Censuses and Surveys—will be increased by £83,000 from £32,588,000 to £32,671,000 and the gross running costs limit will be increased by £112,000 from £46,583,000 to £46,695,000. This reflects a transfer of running costs provision of £112,000 from Chessington Computer Centre for payroll costs, and increased appropriations in aid of £29,000 from the Departments of the Environment, National Heritage and Education for transfers in respect of the general household survey.

Cot Deaths

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she is able to report the outcome of the work of the expert group on the sleeping position of infants and cot death.

Mr. Sackville: We have today arranged for the publication of the report of the Chief Medical Officer's expert group on the sleeping position of infants and cot death. Copies are being placed in the Library.

The main recommendations, confirming existing advice, are:

Infants should not be laid to sleep on their fronts, except in particular circumstances on medical advice, and that the great majority of infants should be nursed on their backs.

Infants should not be exposed to cigarette smoke either before birth or afterwards.

Infants should not be overwrapped or overheated, especially when they are feverish or unwell.

Since the launch of the Government's "Back to Sleep" campaign in 1991, the numbers of cot deaths in the post-neonatal period—from the end of the first month of life until the end of the first year—have halved from 1·25 per 1,000 live births in 1991 to 0·63 per 1,000 live births in 1992.

Cancer Services, London

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to announce her decision on the review of cancer services in London.

Dr. Mawhinney: No single decision rests on the results of the review of cancer specialty services in London. All the specialty reviews are due to be presented to Ministers, as independent advice, in June and will subsequently be published. Together with the review of special health authority research and the assessments of London's hospital sites, the specialty reviews will inform decisions on the future pattern of hospital services in the capital. The timetable is set out in "Making London Better", and any major changes in service provision would be subject to the normal statutory consultation process.

Food Hygiene

Mr. Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the recent Food Safety Week initiative; and what action her Department is taking to promote food hygiene.

Mr. Sackville: The Food Safety Week initiative is very welcome. It will help everyone involved in buying and preparing food, whether for themselves or for others, to keep it safe. This reflects the Government's view that producers, manufacturers, caterers and consumers should all play their part in maintaining high standards of food hygiene.

The Government promote good food hygiene practice to the consumer through such publications as the "Food Safety" booklet in the "Food Sense" series, which incorporates the advice issued from the Chief Medical Officer on food hygiene measures, and the booklet "While you are Pregnant: Safe Eating and how to avoid infection from Food and Animals" targeted specifically at pregnant women. Copies of the publications are available in the Library.

Regulations under the Food Safety Act 1990 deal with food hygiene and the Government issue codes of practice to the authorities responsible for enforcing these regulations, encouraging them to focus on issues of public health and to apply the regulations consistently. Copies of the guidelines issued are available in the Library.

Government promotion of food hygiene to the food industry includes the publication of guidelines on temperature controls for certain foods and participation in food industry trade fairs to help provide food hygiene advice to industry. Copies of the guidelines will be placed in the Library. The Department is currently drawing up plans for a campaign of publicity and information to the food industry, local authorities and those representing consumer interests, in connection with the EC directive on the hygiene of foodstuffs, which is likely to be implemented in late 1994.

Repeat Prescriptions

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she takes to monitor the controls applied by family health services authorities to ensure that general practitioners fulfil their contractual obligation not to issue unnecessary repeat prescriptions.

Dr. Mawhinney: Guidance issued to regional health authorities for 1993-94—EL(92)74—emphasised that the clinical appropriateness of repeat prescribing was a key area to be addressed by general practitioners. Copies of the guidance are available in the Library. It is for regional health authorities to assess family health services authorities progress in monitoring these procedures.

Infant and Perinatal Mortality

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest information about the rates of infant and perinatal mortality in the North West Thames region.

Mr. Sackville: The infant and perinatal mortality rates for the North West Thames regional health authority for 1992[1] are given in the table.

	North West Thames RHA	*Nationally*
Infant mortality rate per 1,000 live births	5·5	6·6
Perinatal mortality rate per 1,000 total births	7·3	7·6

[1] Details supplied by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total amount spent *(a)* by her Department and *(b)* within each regional health authority on press and public relations in 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 25 May 1993]:* Functions which are commonly associated with press and public relations are carried out by the Department's information division. Manpower and running costs of this division are:

	£ million
1989-90	0·890
1990-91	1·250
1991-92	1·491

The information available for health authorities is shown in the table.

Expenditure on public relations

Region	*1989-90 £ (cash)*	*1990-91 £ (cash)*	*1991-92 £ (cash)*
Northern	231,062	392,407	338,150
Yorkshire	157,420	170,155	469,365
Trent	232,036	227,885	185,562
East Anglian	85,856	127,631	88,311
North West Thames	526,049	229,383	121,680
North East Thames	291,673	506,357	477,689
South East Thames	347,031	409,571	273,236
South West Thames	352,965	708,243	337,947
Wessex	227,043	345,591	344,938
Oxford	130,318	145,891	292,508
South Western	97,626	203,291	373,830
West Midlands	562,075	414,941	255,320
Mersey	129,301	254,705	200,366
North Western	196,722	320,258	164,425

Source: Annual accounts (1989-90/1990-91) and annual financial returns (1991-92) of regional and district health authorities in England.

Notes:

1. The figures represent the pay and other costs of public relations departments. This expenditure is incurred mainly by regional health authorities although each regional total includes some expenditure by district health authorities.
2. The figures for 1991-92 are provisional. They exclude expenditure incurred by first wave NHS Trusts from which equivalent information was not collected centrally.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 9 June 1993

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Statute Law Database

Mr. Garnier: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what progress is being made with the development of the statute law database; and what effect that work will have on the range of printed material published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office for the Statutory Publications Office.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Good progress is being made with the development of the database, which is due to provide immediate access to up-to-date statute law by April 1995. In order to meet this target, the Lord Chancellor has authorised the suspension of work done by the Statutory Publications Office in providing certain material for publication by Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Newly enacted Acts in the "Statutes in Force" series will continue to be available as at present, as will the annual volumes of public general acts and measures and of statutory instruments. However, work has been suspended on revised material for "Statutes in Force" and on other tables and indexes. The Lord Chancellor and Her Majesty's Stationery Office will keep under review the balance between printed material and information available from the database, having regard to the potential for improved facilities which the database is expected to provide.

Departmental Cash Limits

Mr. Garnier: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what changes will be made to the cash limit and running costs limit of class IX, vote 1, administration of justice in England and Wales.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary revised estimate, the cash limit for class IX, vote 1 will be decreased by £1,389,000 from £796,918,000 to £795,529,000 and the running cost limit will be decreased by £1,389,000 from £431,979,000 to £430,590,000.

The revised estimate gives effect to a decrease of £1,466,000 in running costs, to allow for an increase in the external financing limit of the Land Registry Trading Fund.

It is also required to give effect to running cost transfers of £77,000 from other Government Departments in relation to the Lord Chancellor's responsibilities in respect of the magistrates courts.

Social Security Commissioners

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the average length of time taken by the office of the Social Security Commissioners to determine individual cases referred to them.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The average time is 5·5 months from the date a case is referred to a commissioner as ready for determination.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to visit Durham city in 1993 for the ninth centenary of Durham cathedral.

Mr. Brooke *[pursuant to his reply, 12 March 1993, c. 752]:* I had the pleasure of visiting the Durham cathedral ninth centenary celebrations on 5 June, coinciding with the 60th annual general meeting of the Friends of Durham Cathedral.

HOME DEPARTMENT

EC Home Affairs Ministers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the outcome of the meeting of EC Home Affairs Ministers in Copenhagen on 2 and 3 June.

Mr. Michael Howard: The meeting of immigration and police Ministers took place in Copenhagen on 1 and 2 June.

Ministers considered progress in relation to the implementation of free movement of persons in accordance with article 8A of the treaty of Rome, and in pursuance of the conclusions of the European Council in Edinburgh, they considered the terms of their report to the European Council in Copenhagen.

Ministers took note of several papers submitted by the ad hoc group of immigration concerning the asylum work programme and preparation for the implementation of the Dublin convention on asylum, and the draft external frontiers convention. They approved a resolution on the reception of particularly vulnerable groups of people from the former Yugoslavia.

Ministers adopted a resolution on the harmonisation of national policies on family reunification, and a recommendation on checks on and the expulsion of third country nationals residing or working in member states without authorisation.

Discussion at the meeting of Trevi Ministers on 2 June focused on the establishment of EUROPOL and in particular the EUROPOL drugs unit. Ministers signed the ministerial agreement on the establishment of the EUROPOL drugs unit and invited the forthcoming European Council in Copenhagen to come to a decision on its location. They also discussed reports and proposals from working groups on matters including terrorism, organised attacks on foreigners, environmental crime, international motor cycle gangs, money laundering and co-operation with eastern Europe.

I am placing in the Library of the House copies of the recommendations and resolutions approved by the Immigration Ministers, together with the ministerial agreement on EUROPOL and the press communiqués issued following the meetings.

Firearms

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what restrictions exist on membership of gun clubs for persons who have had a licence to hold a gun withdrawn by the police.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Unless the club is one which my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has approved under the terms of section 15 of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988, members of a rifle or pistol club require a firearm certificate in order to shoot. Revocation of their certificate by the police would effectively debar a person from membership. A rifle or pistol club which wishes to be approved by my right hon. and learned Friend so that its members may shoot without holding a firearm certificate must satisfy him that the members are of good character. Any club which had among its members a person who had had a firearm certificate revoked would be unlikely to satisfy this test.

Members of shot gun clubs should have a shot gun certificate. While individuals without such a certificate may, exceptionally, use a shot gun at a time and place approved by the local chief officer of police for shooting at artificial targets, this is not intended to provide opportunities for regular shooting by persons who do not possess a certificate. Before granting their approval to such shoots, chief officers must be satisfied that the arrangements involve no danger to the public.

Offender Support Organisations

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all those organisations funded by him which give support and assistance to *(a)* perpetrators of crime and *(b)* their families; and in each case state what funding from Government they have received in each of the last three financial years.

Mr. Maclean: The Home Office publishes each year a list of grants made by Government Departments to voluntary bodies. The list is broken down by subject area and includes a category comprising bodies working with offenders. The 1990-91 list has not yet been published, but I am placing in the Library, and sending the hon. Member, an extract setting out the Home Office's grants together with the index of categories. Full information about 1992-93 has not yet been collated, but I shall send the hon. Member the relevant extract as soon as it is available.

The main schemes for funding work with offenders are the probation supervision grants scheme and the probation accommodation grants scheme. The former provides for grants to voluntary bodies working in partnership with area probation services which run non-residential projects for offenders under supervision in the community. The latter scheme funds voluntary organisations which provide supervised accommodation for offenders. About 130 supervision projects and 5,000 bed spaces are funded under these schemes.

TRANSPORT

Trans-Pennine Crossing

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the Trans-Pennine Consortium about the proposed private crossing of the Pennines along the A628 corridor; and if he will make a statement on the criteria to be applied to the project.

Mr. Key: None. I would be willing to discuss any private sector proposal, but it would be considered in the light of current Government policy, including that on development in national parks.

EMPLOYMENT

Disabled People

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what further steps she intends to take to improve the employment prospects of disabled people.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State intends to announce as soon as possible the outcome of the review of the Employment Service's special schemes which will result in more effective arrangements for providing special employment help to disabled people. The Employment Service will also publish very shortly a document on the funding arrangements for sheltered employment with proposals which should increase the employment opportunities under the programme for severely disabled people.

Safety-at-Work Notices

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals her Department has to introduce regulations which would require safety-at-work notices to be in a particular colour.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Safety Signs Regulations 1980 require safety signs, which are defined as signs using shapes, symbols and colours to convey health and safety information, which are used at work, to conform to certain general rules regarding their shape and colour. These regulations implement EC directive 77/576/EEC.

The Health and Safety Commission is currently preparing proposals to implement EC directive 92/58/EEC on the minimum requirements for health and/or safety signs at work. This directive replaces 77/576/EEC. It maintains the same general rules concerning the colour and shape of signs of the earlier directive. However, it also specifically requires safety signs to be used wherever there are risks to health and safety which cannot be controlled adequately by other means. The directive has to be implemented by 24 June 1994.

Golf Safety

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when the Health and Safety Executive expects to publish the guidance on golf course and range safety.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We expect that this document will be published in autumn 1993.

Passive Smoking

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what statutory provisions govern the extent to which or means by which a person can sue for damages or compensation for illness caused by passive smoking in the workplace; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 8 June 1993]*: There are no statutory provisions expressly dealing with illnesses caused by passive smoking in the workplace. However,

—Regulation 6 of the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992, section 4 of the Factories Act 1961 and Section 7 of the Offices, Shops and Railway Premises Act 1963, which are in part repealed by the 1992 regulations, deal with the ventilation of workplaces;

—Regulation 25(3) of the 1992 regulations deals with the provision of suitable arrangements in rest rooms and rest areas to protect non-smokers from discomfort caused by tobacco smoke.

Breaches of duty under these provisions are actionable in so far as they cause damage.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of the work force has been employed in *(a)* service industries, *(b)* the construction industry, *(c)* manufacturing industry and *(d)* agriculture in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The available information is for Great Britain and covers employees in employment and the self-employed. Employees in employment data can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library. Historical data for self-employed people is available in the Library on page 54 of Historical Supplement Number 3, issued with the June 1992 edition of the *Employment Gazette*. Recent estimates for the self-employed are as follows:

Self-employed people—industrial analysis

Thousands

Great Britain	*June 1992*	[1] *December 1992*
Service industries	1,799	1,799
Construction	585	559
Manufacturing industry	279	285
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	247	236

[1] Latest date available.

WALES

Agricultural Training Board

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to make a statement concerning the future funding arrangements for the agricultural training board in Wales; and what plans he has to increase funding levels.

Mr. John Redwood: The future funding arrangements for agricultural training in Great Britain were announced by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 1 April 1993. My Department is having discussions with ATB-Land Base to establish whether additional support should be provided for agricultural training in Wales.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the future composition and role of the Agricultural Training Board for Wales.

Mr. John Redwood: This is a matter for the directors of ATB-Land Base, who are considering it, in consultation with my Department.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the current *(a)* budget and *(b)* staffing of the Agricultural Training Board for Wales.

Mr. Redwood: The direct administrative costs of the Agricultural Training Board-Land Base organisation in Wales in 1993-94 will amount to about £400,000 with additional overhead costs being borne centrally. There are currently 14 staff employed in Wales some of whom work on a part-time or short-term contract basis.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many farming apprenticeships are generated by the Agricultural Training Board for Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The agricultural apprenticeship scheme came to an end some years ago with the introduction of the youth training schemes. In Wales the board has continued to run a trainee of the year scheme, sponsored by National Westminster bank, and this draws on young people who are involved in YTS schemes, certificate courses and simply learning on the job interspersed with short courses.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to secure that the relationship between the Welsh Forum and the Agricultural Training Board in Wales is similar to the adopted arrangements in Scotland.

Mr. Redwood: Yes.

Nature Conservation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to introduce legislation to enhance the protection of wildlife and to give local authorities in Wales new powers to protect sites of nature conservation interest.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) on 26 May 1993, c. *553*.

Newchurch Report

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a copy of the Newchurch report commissioned by the West Glamorgan health authority.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Copies of the report "West Glamorgan and Environs Service Review" published by West Glamorgan health authority and West Glamorgan family health services authority have been placed in the Library of the House. The role of the consultants, Messrs. Newchurch, was to provide independent advice to assist the authorities in compiling their report. The only element of the report that reflects the consultants' own judgment is chapter 13, the critique.

Diabetics

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 27 May, *Official Report*, column *711*, how he assesses whether the target set in the St. Vincent declaration has been met without holding central information on the incidence of blindness among diabetics.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 17 May. However, the Welsh Office is committed to collecting information on a broad range of conditions, including diabetes.

Water Pollution

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of pollution levels of rivers and streams in Wales in the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Water quality of rivers and streams in Wales is regularly monitored by the National Rivers Authority and the results of samples obtained are recorded on public registers maintained by the authority. The authority publishes comprehensive river quality surveys every five years, and pollution incident reports annually, copies of which are placed in the Library of the House.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the current weight of plutonium, stored under safeguards, arising from foreign reactors *(a)* in spent fuel, *(b)* under reprocessing and *(c)* in separated form at Sellafield; what notifications to (i) the International Atomic Energy Agency and (ii) the European Atomic Energy Agency in regard to safeguards provision Her Majesty's Government have made regarding foreign origin plutonium at Sellafield; and if he will set out the responsibilities British Nuclear Fuels plc has to his Department and the respective international authorities in regard to safeguards.

Mr. Eggar: Details of the civil plutonium stocks, broken down into the categories specified by the hon. Member, are given in the plutonium figures published on 4 February 1993 and placed in the Library of the House. As operator of the Sellafield site, British Nuclear Fuels plc meets the requirements of the Euratom safeguards authorities by supplying, via my Department, inventory change reports, material balance reports and physical inventory listings as laid down in Safeguards Regulation 3227/76. These reports are forwarded by Euratom to the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what quantities of plutonium created in the Wylfa nuclear plant have been subject to application of export licences since 1975.

Mr. Eggar: I cannot answer for previous Administrations. Irradiated fuel from Britain's various civil Magnox reactors is reprocessed together and therefore the plutonium arising, whether in store or exported, is not linked to the specific power station in which it was created.

THORP

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what communications he has received from British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. regarding the future strategy for handling radioactive wastes from the thermal oxide reprocessing plant.

Mr. Eggar: I receive communications from British Nuclear Fuels plc on a wide range of issues, including the arrangements for the management of waste arising from reprocessing at Sellafield.

European Safeguards and Development Association

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 20 May, *Official Report*, column *288*, what benefits and new information accrued to his Department as a result of the departmental representation at the European Safeguards and Development Association meeting; how many personnel from the Atomic Energy Authority were present at the meeting; and if he will make a statement on the costs incurred by the attendance at the meeting.

Mr. Eggar: The 15th symposium of the European Safeguards Research and Development Association included, inter alia, sessions on challenges and trends in modern safeguards, safeguards concepts and national programmes. These provided information important in the development of international safeguards policy, for which my Department has a responsibility. Other sessions dealt with technical aspects of safeguards implementation and technology. Full proceedings of the symposium will be published shortly.

In connection with the United Kingdom's programme of safeguards research and development my Department funded participation in the symposium of four AEA personnel and contributed to that of a fifth. The cost of this and departmental attendance was approximately £9,000. Attendance of other AEA personnel at the symposium is a matter for AEA.

Nuclear Decommissioning

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he proposes to take following the National Audit Office report on decommissioning civil nuclear facilities.

Mr. Eggar: The National Audit Office report of 4 June is being considered by the Public Accounts Committee. The Department's accounting officer will be giving oral evidence to the Committee on 30 June. The Government will give a detailed response to the subsequent PAC report in the usual way through a Treasury minute.

Waste Incineration

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to examine the proposals put forward in the 17th report of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution (Cm 2181) on the use of waste as fuel for energy in incineration plants.

Mr. Eggar: I welcome the 17th report of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution (CM 2181) and note its view that incineration will prove to be the best

practicable environmental option for municipal waste requiring disposal. Energy recovery is accepted as a legitimate means of recycling and I have already agreed with my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside that we should re-examine the idea of setting waste-to-energy targets. The Government will be making a full response to the Royal Commission's report in due course.

Firework Injuries

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how long after 5 November estimated figures for the number of firework injuries are made available to his Department.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 27 May 1993]:* Returns are usually received by the Consumer Safety Unit by the end of February the following year.

North Sea Licences

Mr. Page: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if consortia from the 14th licensing round who withdraw will be given the opportunity to resubmit their applications.

Mr. Eggar: No consortium has withdrawn as a whole from any application made under the 14th offshore licensing round.

Mr. Page: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what account his Department takes of withdrawal of consortia from one bid for North sea licences when considering granting approval to that consortia for other bids.

Mr. Eggar: No account will be taken of the withdrawal of a company from one or more of its sole or consortium applications under the 14th offshore licensing round when considering any other applications it has made.

Assisted Areas

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what weighting he will give to factors other than statistical measures of unemployment in determining the outcome of his Department's review of the assisted areas.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 27 May 1993]:* The factors, other than statistical measures of unemployment, which will be taken into account in the review were set out in the review consultation document issued last year. A range of weights will be applied to these factors in determining the resulting status of the travel-to-work areas.

Inward Investing Firms

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many inward investing firms that had received financial assistance closed; how much grant they had received; and what was the total employment at the date of closure, in each region in each year since 1987-88.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 8 June 1993]:* Since the beginning of April 1987 to date 651 projects by foreign owned companies supported by either regional selective assistance or regional development grant, were completed. £95·8 million was paid in grant in support of 18,269 jobs. A check on whether all these companies now continue to trade since their projects were completed would involve disproportionate cost.

Offshore Oil

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to make public the base line surveys carried out by oil companies in Cardigan Bay, St. George's channel and the Bristol channel prior to commencing exploratory drilling activities.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* Any surveys carried out by oil companies are provided to the Government in confidence. Any further dissemination is a matter for the companies.

Gas and Electricity

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to make regulations relating to price indications given in connection with the resale of gas and electricity.

Mr. Eggar: We have carefully considered this matter. There appears to be insufficient evidence to suggest that there is significant abuse. We therefore do not believe that there is a strong case for making regulations at this time. Nonetheless, we will keep the situation under review and we remain ready to reconsider the position at any time in the light of new evidence.

MV Braer

Ms Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish in full the details of all water samples analysed by Warren Spring Laboratory following the Braer disaster, together with the dates each sample was taken.

Mr. Norris: I have been asked to reply.

The Department of Transport's marine pollution control unit was the customer for the sampling work carried out by Warren Spring Laboratory during the Braer spill.

The information is as follows:

Date	*Sample time*	*Location*	*Sample depth M.*	*Parts per million*
8 January	1200	Quendale	Surface	100
8 January	1300	Garth's Ness	Surface	10,000
8 January	1430	Loch of Spiggie	Surface	Not analysed
9 January	0900	Ireland	Surface	715
9 January	1020	May Wick	Surface	18
9 January	0230	Hamnavo	Surface	115
9 January	1400	Papil	Surface	28
10 January	1200	Quendale	Surface	43

Date	Sample time	Location	Sample depth M.	Parts per million
10 January	1400	Garth's Ness	Surface	10,000
11 January	1000	Vatnabrek	1-10	0·00
11 January	1130	The Nev	Surface	0·00
11 January	1400	The Nev	Surface	0·00
11 January	1300	Vaila Sound	1-10	0·00
11 January	1600	Scalloway	1	2·15+
12 January	1000	Oxna	1	0·18
12 January	1015	Oxna	5	0·25
12 January	1040	Hildasay	1	0·81
12 January	1040	Hildasay	5	0·81
12 January	1045	Hildasay	1	0·96
12 January	1045	Hildasay	5	0·96
12 January	1110	Papa	1	1·12
12 January	1110	Papa	5	1·44
12 January	1115	Papa	1	1·44
12 January	1120	Papa	1	1·59
12 January	1125	Papa	5	1·52
12 January	1125	Papa	1	1·67
12 January	1155	Bur Wick	1	1·75
12 January	1155	Bur Wick	5	1·75
12 January	1200	Bur Wick	1	1·91
12 January	1200	Bur Wick	5	1·91
12 January	1230	Inner Harbour	1	0·57
12 January	1230	Inner Harbour	5	0·73
12 January	1510	Oxna	1	0·57
12 January	1520	Oxna	1	0·73
12 January	1530	Oxna	2·5	0·81
12 January	1530	Oxna	15	0·81
12 January	1530	Oxna	10	0·89
12 January	1530	Oxna	5	0·96
12 January	1530	Oxna	2·5	0·96
12 January	1530	Oxna	2·5	0·89
13 January	1110	West Hildasay	2	0·69
13 January	1115	West Hildasay	10	0·45
13 January	1221	Clift Sound	2	0·77
13 January	1222	Clift Sound	10	1·00
13 January	1244	Clift Sound	10	0·85
13 January	1246	Clift Sound	1	1·11
13 January	1302	Clift Sound	1	0·52
13 January	1311	Clift Sound	1	0·41
13 January	1315	Clift Sound	10	0·44
13 January	1318	Clift Sound	1	0·24
13 January	1344	Clift Sound	10	0·27
13 January	1354	Clift Sound	1	0·36
13 January	1356	Clift Sound	10	0·45
13 January	1418	Clift Sound	1	0·26
13 January	1430	Clift Sound	1	0·36
13 January	1432	Clift Sound	1	0·67
13 January	1435	Clift Sound	1	0·84

Note: After 13 January, the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department assumed responsibility for all sampling.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Domestic Energy (VAT)

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the impact on the retail prices index *(a)* during the 1994-95 financial year and *(b)* during the 1995-96 financial year, of increasing the rate of VAT on domestic fuel and power to 8 per cent. and 17·5 per cent. respectively.

Mr. Nelson: The extension of VAT to domestic fuel and power is estimated to add just under 0·4 per cent. to the retail prices index in 1994-95, and just over 0·4 per cent. further in 1995-96.

Pensions

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average public sector pension in payment and the average length of service of public sector pensioners in the current year.

Mr. Portillo: Information about average pensions and lengths of service of all public sector pensioners is not kept centrally. Estimates of the average pensions payable from the main public service schemes in the latest year for which information is readily available is as follows:

Scheme	Year	Number of pensioners		Average pensions	
		Members	Dependants	Members £	Dependants £
Civil service	1993-94	399,600	123,500	4,093	1,700
NHS (England and Wales)	1993-94	312,600	46,800	4,125	2,391
NHS (Scotland)	1993-94	49,100	5,800	3,647	1,638
Teachers (England and Wales)	1993-94	306,000	22,000	6,300	2,000
Teachers (Scotland)	1993-94	32,100	3,500	6,459	2,129
Armed forces	1993-94	263,500	84,900	4,326	2,338
Local government (England and Wales)	1991-92	573,000	111,100	2,515	1,127
Local government (Scotland)	1991-92	85,467[1]		2,036[1]	

[1] Figures include both scheme members and dependants.

North Sea Oil and Gas

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the total amount of revenue which has accrued to the Treasury from the development of North sea *(a)* oil and *(b)* gas in each year since exploration and development began.

Mr. Dorrell: Revenues raised from United Kingdom oil and gas production are as follows:

£ million

Year	Annual revenues
1968-69	1
1969-70	2
1970-71	5
1971-72	10
1972-73	15
1973-74	15
1974-75	20
1975-76	25
1976-77	81
1977-78	238
1978-79	565
1979-80	2,313
1980-81	3,743
1981-82	6,492
1982-83	7,822
1983-84	8,798
1984-85	12,035
1985-86	11,348
1986-87	4,783
1987-88	4,618
1988-89	3,168
1989-90	2,368
1990-91	2,312
1991-92	979
[1]1992-93	1,278

[1] provisional estimate.

It is not possible to subdivide these amounts as to those derived from oil production and from gas production, or those from areas outside the North sea.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the number of projects which have specifically been funded by revenues from North sea oil and gas revenues in each year since tax revenues accrued from exploration and development.

Mr. Dorrell: None. It is not the policy of this Government, or any other in recent history, to hypothecate tax revenue to particular projects.

Corporation Tax

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total corporation tax paid by the 25 largest United Kingdom companies, measured by turnover, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Dorrell: The 25 largest United Kingdom companies and company groups, based on the levels of turnover in their latest accounts, had corporation tax liabilities, including advance corporation tax, as follows in the years 1987 to 1991:

£ billion

Year	Number
1987	3·1
1988	3·0
1989	3·5
1990	3·5
1991	3·3

Liabilities for 1992 are not available yet. Corporation tax liabilities exclude double tax relief for tax paid overseas.

Commemorative Coins

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans Her Majesty's Government have to issue new commemorative coins.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Her Majesty the Queen has been graciously pleased to approve the recommendation of my predecessor, the right hon. Member for Kingston-upon-Thames (Mr. Lamont), that a 50p coin be issued featuring a special design to commemorate the 50th anniversary next year of the D-Day landings of June 1944. It is intended that the coin should be available in 1994 for general circulation. There will also be collector versions in base and precious metal.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Cambodia

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Government policy in regard to the current activities of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia; and what action will be taken to ensure that human rights initiatives are maintained in that country.

Mr. Goodlad: We deplore the Khmer Rouge's refusal to co-operate with the United Nations Transitional

Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) and the attacks on United Nations personnel and ethnic Vietnamese. We believe that the results of the election last month show that the vast majority of the Cambodian people reject the Khmer Rouge and its ways.

We co-sponsored the resolution at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva in February requesting the United Nations Secretary General to appoint a special representative to co-ordinate the United Nation's human rights presence in Cambodia and mandating the centre for human rights to run a human rights programme in Cambodia after the withdrawal of UNTAC. The former President of the Philippines, Corazon Aquino, has been nominated special representative.

Israel

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans the Government have to ask the United Nations to intervene in the case of the 400 Palestinians expelled from Israel last December.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We voted for United Nations Security Council resolution (UNSCR) 799 which calls for the return of the deportees. We welcome the recent Israeli Government announcement that they have no plans to resort to deportations and their hope that compliance with SCR 799 can be achieved.

Nuclear Non-proliferation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library a copy of the statement made by the head of the United Kingdom delegation to the first preparatory committee meeting for the fifth review conference of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty held in New York in May.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 7 June, c. *86*.

Cyprus

Mr. Deva: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will implement the recommendations of the Third report of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs of Session 1986-87, HC 23, on Cyprus, in connection with contracts between northern Cyprus and the outside world.

Mr. Goodlad: Government policy on contracts remains as stated in the published observations on the report.

Paris (Visit)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what matters were discussed and decided during his most recent visit to Paris.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Discussion between the French Foreign Minister and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs concentrated on the situation in former Yugoslavia. They agreed to continue to work closely together for a solution.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the subjects discussed with the French Foreign Minister at the meeting in Paris on 1 June.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Discussion between the French Foreign Minister and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs concentrated on the situation in former Yugoslavia. They agreed to continue to work closely together for a solution.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will call for a specific investigation of alleged Croatian atrocities and war crimes in the former Yugoslavia at the next meeting of the United Nations Security Council.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The investigation into violations of international humanitarian law in the former Yugoslavia, by all parties to the conflict, is being conducted by the United Nations Commission of Experts established under United Nations Security Council resolution 780.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to support the principle of trials for suspected war criminals in the former Yugoslavia regardless of the ethnic origins of either the perpetrators or the alleged victims; and if he will make a statement on the United Nations Security Council's decision to set up an international tribunal to deal with such war crimes.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We fully support the UN Security Council's decision to establish an ad hoc tribunal to try those responsible for violations of international humanitarian law in the former Yugoslavia. The tribunal is mandated to bring alleged perpetrators from any of the parties to justice.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to support the reconvening of the London conference on the former Yugoslavia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There may be a case for reconvening the London conference at the right time. But, before going ahead, there would need to be prior agreement among all parties on objectives and a clear idea of the desired outcome. We would give particular weight to the views of the co-chairmen of the steering committee of the international conference on the former Yugoslavia, Lord Owen and Mr. Stoltenberg.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Croatian Government following the establishment of road blocks around the village of Kruscica; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None. We are investigating reports which suggest that Kruscica is being blocked.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with Lord Owen since the Foreign Ministers' meeting in Washington DC on 22 May; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs had an informal meeting with Lord Owen on 6 June and on 8 June attended the General Affairs Council in Luxembourg.

which Lord Owen briefed on his efforts to achieve a negotiated settlement in Bosnia. The normal arrangements will be made to inform the House of the outcome of the Council.

HEALTH

Doncaster Health Care Trust

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to receive the financial results of the Doncaster Health Care Trust for the year 1992-93; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Doncaster health care trust, in common with all other national health service trusts, is required to present its annual accounts to an annual public meeting no later than 30 September following the year-end accounts.

For the financial year 1992-93, the trust will need to hold this meeting on or before 30 September 1993.

North Western RHA

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on hospital closures in the North Western regional health authority.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for North Western regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact Sir Bruce Martin, the RHA chairman, for details.

Equal Opportunities

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the equal opportunities guidance from the Department of Health management executive requires the completion of a job description prior to *(a)* advertising, *(b)* interviewing or *(c)* appointing persons to a post within a hospital or medical school.

Dr. Mawhinney: Departmental guidance EL(91)71, a copy of which is available in the Library, recommends that job descriptions should be issued to members of all hospital appointments committees to provide an objective basis for shortlisting and interviewing. Appointments to medical school posts are made by universities, which are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education.

Nurses

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current status of the consultation exercise being undertaken by the United Kingdom central council in conjunction with her Department concerning proposals to amend the criteria for community nurse status; and when she expects the United Kingdom central council to produce its final proposals.

Mr. Sackville: The United Kingdom central council's current consultation on its proposals for the reform of post registration education and practice finishes at the end of September. We would expect to receive its final proposals in the autumn.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the decision of the United Kindom central council not to recognise courses and seminars taken by practice nurses for accreditation towards community nurse status.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for the United Kingdom central council as the body with statutory responsibility for the type and standard of nursing, midwifery and health visiting training.

Population and Mortality

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is *(a)* the population and *(b)* the standardised mortality rate for each health region.

Mr. Sackville: The information for 1991 (the latest year for which information is available) is shown in the table:

Population and standardised mortality ratios for England and Wales by regional health authority for 1991

	Provisional estimate of resident population at mid-1991 (thousands)	*Standardised mortality ratio[1] 1991*
England and Wales	50,954·8	100
England	48,068·4	100
Wales	2,886·4	101
Northern	3,084·2	113
Yorkshire	3,661·5	103
Trent	4,700·4	102
East Anglian	2,091·9	92
North West Thames	3,560·4	95
North East Thames	3,756·7	99
South East Thames	3,686·2	96
South West Thames	3,023·1	92
Wessex	2,983·0	91
Oxford	2,559·9	94
South Western	3,298·0	92
West Midlands	5,254·9	103
Mersey	2,407·5	108
North Western	4,000·7	111

[1] A standardised mortality ratio (SMR) is a single figure measure of mortality and is used to examine the relationship between: (1) the actual number of deaths in any given area and for any given period, and; in this instance (2) the number that would have been expected had that area experienced the sex and age specific mortality rates observed in England and Wales as a whole during that year. England and Wales in this instance is the 'standard' by which the other areas are measured and accordingly has an SMR of 100.

Health Authority Chairmen

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will discontinue the payments of salaries to health authority and trust chairmen and non-executive directors and replace them with payments for loss of earnings.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have no plans to do.

Triazolam

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the availability of products containing triazolam in the United Kingdom.

Dr. Mawhinney: All licences for triazolam products, including the brand named Halcion, to Upjohn Limited are being revoked on 9 June 1993. Triazolam products, which were available for the treatment of insomnia between 1978 and 1991, will therefore remain withdrawn.

On the advice of the Committee on Safety of Medicines, licences for Halcion were suspended in October 1991 on grounds of safety and all triazolam products were withdrawn from the market at that time, pending proceedings to revoke the licences.

The three bodies who have heard representations from Upjohn against the proposed revocation of the triazolam licences have given conflicting advice. The Committee on Safety of Medicines and the Medicines Commission were both concerned about the safety of triazolam and advised that the 0·25 mg product licences should be revoked but they differed as to whether or not the 0·125 mg licences should be revoked. In contrast, a panel of persons appointed by the licensing authority under the Medicines Act 1968 concluded that the benefits of both dose forms of triazolam outweigh the risks and appeared largely reassured by the revisions of the product information proposed by Upjohn.

The licensing authority has based its decision on consideration of the safety of triazolam. It has taken into account the views of each of the advisory bodies in reaching the decision and carefully considered the underlying reasons for the differences in the conclusions and advice received. The licensing authority has not accepted the conclusions of the panel and is not reassured of the safety of triazolam.

The licensing authority has examined measures alternative to revocation of the licences for triazolam but has concluded that restrictions in the dose, duration of treatment or availability of triazolam would not provide adequate safeguards against its hazards in normal use.

The first concern must be for patients. Because we are not satisfied as to the safety of triazolam, we believe it is right to be cautious.

In summary, the licensing authority has considered the basis of the panel's conclusions carefully but remains not reassured of the safety of the triazolam products, and considers that the risks of triazolam outweigh its benefits in normal use.

Copies of the report of the panel of persons appointed and detailed reasons for the licensing authority's decision are available in the Library.

NHS Estates

Mr. Congdon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the plans for the NHS Estates executive agency.

Mr. Sackville: We are pleased to report that the National Health Service Estates Management and Health Building Agency (NHS Estates) has had a successful year as an executive agency of this Department. We have agreed the agency's 1993-96 three-year corporate plan and the annual business plan. Targets for 1993-94 are to:

(i) Deliver all products and services on time and within cost.
(ii) Review with customers the quality of services provided, frequency and style depending on the nature of the contract terms.
(iii) increase revenues from the NHS and private sector to 67 per cent. of the cost of services purchased. (100 per cent. in 1995-96).
(iv) Increase income from United Kingdom consultancy services by 5 per cent. to £640,000.
(v) Untie £725,000 of Agency resources to the NHS (market test) and recover through sales. (Total £1·2 million now, £2·4 million 1995-96).
(vi) Achieve BS5750 quality assurance accreditation by 31 March 1994.
(vii) Explore the scope for market testing functions carried out on behalf of the NHS Management Executive by 30 September 1993.
(viii) Keep within agreed Public Expenditure Survey baselines and additionally make 4 per cent. (£400,000) efficiency savings on the running costs element.
(ix) Complete relocation of new headquarters to Leeds, saving £1·1 million per annum.
(x) Co-ordinate an induction and training programme for all staff (75 per cent. of agency staff are new personnel). This will be ongoing and will be incorporated in the appraisal programme.
(xi) Develop an overall measure of efficiency based on a cost weighted activity index by 1995-96.

National Health Service Staff

Mr. Roger Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement about her plans to publish new advice to staff in the national health service about relations with the public and the media.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Sir Duncan Nichol has now issued new advice, "Guidance for staff on relations with the public and the media", under cover of executive letter (93)51. The guidance has been issued to national health service employers, including regional, district and family health services authorities and national health service trusts. The guidance provides a framework within which local procedures can and should be developed to enable staff to raise legitimate concerns about health care issues in a responsible way. Copies of the executive letter and accompanying guidance have been placed in the Library.

National Health Service Trusts

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether NHS employees acting as non-executive directors of trusts may receive remuneration from both sources.

Dr. Mawhinney: National health service employees who are eligible to act as non-executive directors of trusts are entitled to receive the standard level of remuneration of £5,000 per annum, regardless of any other earnings.

National Health Service Employees (Cars)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her Department's policy about NHS employees being provided with foreign-produced cars.

Dr. Mawhinney: The decision as to which vehicle to provide to national health service employees required to travel regularly on official business is entirely for local management.

Ambulance Service

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the latest available response times for ambulances dealing with 999 calls in Bordon, Hampshire.

Mr. Sackville: Information on the Bordon area is not available centrally.

In 1991-92, the Hampshire ambulance service as a whole responded to 97 per cent. of emergency calls within the 19-minute patients charter standard.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received about providing paramedic cover in ambulances serving Bordon, Hampshire, in response to 999 calls.

Mr. Sackville: I have received one letter from my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates).

Hampshire ambulance service, which includes the Bordon area, is well on the way to meeting the Government's target of having one paramedic on each front-line ambulance by the end of 1995.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Cost Increases

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what he estimates will be the increase in social security costs in the next year; and what is the breakdown of those costs between increases due to costs related to *(a)* unemployment and *(b)* other factors.

Mr. Scott: The estimated increase in social security expenditure from 1992-93 to 1993-94 is £6,152 million, of which £2,035 million is due to costs related to unemployment.

National Insurance

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many men and women paid both class 1 and class 2 national insurance contributions in 1991-92 and 1992-93; and what those figures represented as a percentage of the combined total of both classes of NI contributions in each year.

Mr. Hague: Figures for 1991-92 and 1992-93 are not yet available. The latest figures are in the table.

1990-91	*Men*	*Women*	*Total*
Mixed class 1/2[1] number of contributors	242,000	70,000	312,000
Percentage of total class 1 and 2	1·7 per cent.	0·7 per cent.	1·3 per cent.

[1] Figures show the number of contributors who paid at least one class 2 contribution and some class 1 contributions during the tax year. It is not possible to distinguish between those who were concurrently or consecutively employed and self-employed.

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to change the situation whereby a self-employed person who also works part-time for another employer is required to pay both class 1 and class 2 national insurance, regardless of the level of the combined incomes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: We have no such plans. The current arrangements ensure that where someone has earnings from more than one employment, regardless of the level of the combined incomes, the total contributions payable under class 1 and class 2 are subject to an annual maximum; currently £1,795·84.

If someone works for an employer and earns less than the lower earnings limit, currently £56 a week, no class 1 contribution is due. Similarly, self-employed people who expect their earnings to be less than a prescribed level, currently £3,140 a year, can apply to be excepted from paying class 2 contributions.

Where contributions from more than one occupation are payable, they are aggregated for the purposes of calculating entitlement to contributory benefits.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many awards of the higher rate mobility component of disability living allowance have been made to date under the severe mental impairment regulations which took effect from 1 April 1992.

Mr. Scott: As at 31 May 1993, 2,062 such awards had been recorded.

EDUCATION

School Transport

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when the current three-mile rule for free transport for children to schools was introduced; what plans he has to revise it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The present definition of "walking distance" —two miles for pupils aged five to seven, three miles for eight to sixteen-year-olds, measured by the nearest available route—was introduced in the 1944 Act. Section 39 deals with the grounds on which a parent is not guilty of an offence if his child fails to attend school regularly. It, along with other factors, is taken into account by local education authorities in considering, under section 55 of the 1944 Act, when free transport is necessary.

The Government have no plans to revise the present provisions.

Teacher Training

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proposals he has regarding the qualifications necessary before an individual may embark on a teacher training course; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend has issued a consultation document today, containing proposals for reforming courses of initial training for primary teachers. The only major change proposed to entry qualifications is that there should be a new requirement that with effect from 1 September 1998 all entrants to such courses who were born on or after 1 September 1979 should have attained a standard equivalent to GCSE grade C in science. The qualifications for entry to initial training courses for secondary teachers were set out in DFE circular 9-92 and are unchanged. Copies of both documents have been placed in the Library.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Departmental Buildings

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the buildings currently owned or rented by his Department, together with *(a)* the estimated value, *(b)* the annual rent and *(c)* the annual maintenance cost of each building in the current financial year.

Mr. Mates: The information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Available information is detailed in Northern Ireland Estimates and United Kingdom Supply Estimates which are held in the Library.

Rates Arrears

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* business and *(b)* domestic rate payers are in arrears with their 1992-93 rates payments in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: Rate collection operational matters are the responsibility of Mr. David Gallagher, chief executive of the Rate Collection Agency. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. W. Gallagher to Mr. William O'Brien, dated 4 June 1993.

You recently asked a Parliamentary Question about how many business and domestic ratepayers were in arrears with their 1992-93 rates payments in Northern Ireland. As I am responsible for the Rate Collection Agency, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has asked me to reply.

At 31 March 1993 there were 666,026 rated properties in Northern Ireland of which 171,237 were owned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive which collects rates together with rent fortnightly from its tenants and pays the rates in bulk to the Rate Collection Agency. Of the remaining properties 5,852 non-domestic and 23,729 domestic had arrears outstanding at 31 March 1993.

Should you require any further information please let me know.

Fire Services

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the recommended complement of staff for the Northern Ireland fire brigade in each of the last five years.

Mr. Atkins: The recommended complements are as follows:

	Whole-time	*Retained*	*Control*	*Others*
1988	731	803	62	228
1989	733	980	62	229½
1990	733	980	59	218½
1991	831	980	59	225½
1992	847	980	59	222½

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many incidents the Northern Ireland fire brigade has responded to in each of the last five years.

Mr. Atkins: The number of incidents was as follows:

	Number
1988	22,970
1989	28,109
1990	25,099
1991	30,299
1992	27,288

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the operation of the pay formula as it applies to the Northern Ireland fire brigade and the impact of the 1·5 per cent. pay increase; and what steps are proposed to reinstate the departure in the current year from the agreed pay formula.

Mr. Atkins: The Government are not a party to the firefighters' pay agreement and have no role in the negotiation of firefighters' pay, which is negotiated on a United Kingdom basis within the National Joint Council for Local Authorities' Fire Brigades, on which employers' and employees' organisations are represented. The current pay agreement provides for annual increases in firefighters' pay to be linked to the upper quartile of movements in pay for skilled manual workers. However, the Government have made it clear that the fire service employers are expected to comply with the policy on public sector pay, that any increases in the 1993 pay round should not exceed 1·5 per cent. Resources for the Fire Authority for Northern Ireland for the 1993-94 financial year have been determined accordingly. It is too early to speculate about the operation of the fire service pay formula after the current year.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to how many incidents retained firemen responded to with below the Home Office recommended level of crews in each of the last five years.

Mr. Atkins: I am advised by the Chief Fire Officer that accurate figures on the number of incidents retained firemen responded to with below the Home Office recommended level of crews are not available on a Province-wide basis. However, I am assure that the number of such incidents in each of the last five years was negligible.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish details of manning levels in the Northern Ireland fire brigade over each of the last five years.

Mr. Atkins: The information is as follows:

	Whole-time pumping appliances	*Retained pumping appliances*	*Emergency tenders*	*Aerial appliance*	*Foam tenders*	*Emergency support units*
1988	5	6	5	3	2	2
1989	5	6	5	3	2	2
1990	5	6	5	3	2	2
1991	5	6	5	3	2	2
1992	5	6	5	3	2	2

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many fire stations have been upgraded in each of the last five years; and if he will list those stations which have been recommended for upgrading but have still to be upgraded.

Mr. Atkins: Ballymena fire station was upgraded in 1990, Bangor in 1991 and Lisburn in 1992.

The following stations recommended for upgrading have still to be upgraded.

Glengormley (to be completed this year)
Portadown

Enniskillen
Newry
Lurgan
Coleraine
Newtownards
Omagh

"Making Belfast Work"

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the names and locations of the maintained schools and the controlled schools within the area of the Belfast education and library board which are excluded from the "making Belfast work" initiative.

Mr. Ancram: The information is as follows:

Maintained schools within the area of the Belfast education and library board which are outside the catchment area for the "making Belfast work" initiative:

Our Lady of Lourdes CB Primary School, 700 Antrim Road, BT15 5EQ
Holy Rosary Primary School, 70 Sunnyside Crescent, BT7 3DB
St. Anne's Primary School, Lisburn Road, BT10 0LF
St. Mary's Star of the Sea Primary School, 730-760 Shore Road BT15 4HL
St. Bride's Primary School, 36 Derryvolgie Avenue, BT9 6FP
St. Therese of Lisieux Primary School, 472 Antrim Road, BT15 5GF
St. Michael's Primary School, 514 Ravenhill Road, BT6 0BW
St. Joseph's Primary School, 31A Holland Drive, BT5 6EH

Controlled schools within the area of the Belfast education and library board which are outside the catchment area for the "making Belfast work" initiative:

Primary
Belmont Primary School, 82 Belmont Church Road, BT4 3FG
Rosetta Primary School, 21-23 Knockbreda Road, BT6 0JA
Strand Primary School, Strandburn Street, BT4 1LX
Harding Memorial Primary School, 105-107 Cregagh Road, BT6 8PZ
Strandtown Primary School, North Road, BT4 3DJ
Seaview Primary School, Seaview Drive, BT15 3NB
Orangefield Primary School, Marina Park, BT5 6BA
Carr's Glen Primary School 629-633 Oldpark Road, BT14 6QX
Sydenham Primary School, Strandburn Street, BT4 1LX
Ballygolan Primary School, 41-83 Serpentine Road, BT36 7HB
Greenwood Primary School, 436-456 Upper Newtownards Road, BT4 3HS
Stranmillis Primary School, Knightbridge Park, BT9 5eZ
Cavehill Primary School, Upper Castle Park, BT15 5FG
Knocknagoney Primary School, Knocknagoney Road, BT4 2NR
Dundela Infants Primary School, Wilgar Street, BT4 3BL
Lowwood Primary School, Sheringhurst Park, BT15 4BL
Forge Integrated Primary School, 6 Balmoral Avenue, BT9 6MW

Secondary/Grammar
Ashfield Girls', Holywood Road, BT4 2LY
Ashfield Boys', Holywood Road, BT4 2LY
Orangefield High School, Cameronian Drive, BT5 6AW
Wellington College, Annadale Embankment, BT7 3AE
Grosvenor High School, Cameronian Drive, BT5 6AX

Nursery
Glenbank, Ligoniel Road, BT14 8BW
Brefne, 11 Salisbury Avenue, BT15 5EZ
Glenahu, Holywood Road, BT4 2LT

Pensions Payments

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many future pensioners in Northern Ireland have received forms requesting information as to the payment of retirement pensions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: I have been asked to reply.

The administration of retirement pensions is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. William O'Brien, dated 8 June 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many future pensioners in Northern Ireland have received forms requesting information as to the payment of retirement pension.

In any one year the Benefits Agency issues automatically to addresses in Northern Ireland, on behalf of the Social Security Agency in Northern Ireland, about 21,000 invitations to claim retirement pension for people approaching pension age (65 for a man and 60 for a woman). The claim form asks the person to choose the method by which they wish their pension to be paid. This can be either directly into a bank or building society account every 4 or 13 weeks or by weekly order book at a post office.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library. I am copying this letter to Mr. Alec Wylie the Chief Executive of the Social Security Agency in Northern Ireland.

ENVIRONMENT

Waste Incineration

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he received the recent report on incineration of waste by the Royal Commission on environmental pollution, Cm 2181; and what response he plans to make to the report.

Mr. Yeo: My Department received the report on the incineration of waste by the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution on 20 May 1993. The Government will publish their formal response to the report in due course.

Local Government Finance

Ms Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has *(a)* for each local authority, *(b)* for each region and *(c)* for England for the amount and proportion of local authority income coming from (i) council tax, (ii) national non-domestic rate, (iii) transitional relief and (iv) council tax benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I have today placed in the Library figures for the amount of national non-domestic rate which authorities are entitled to receive from the non-domestic rate pool in 1993-94, the amounts in respect of council tax, including transitional relief and council tax benefit, which

they have budgeted to receive, and the percentages of each authority's budget requirement which they represent. A summary for each region and England is given in the table.

Transitional relief grant and council tax benefit grant are paid only to billing authorities and together with receipts of council taxes from council taxpayers constitute the amounts in respect of council taxes which are payable to billing authorities and major precepting authorities. It is not possible to say what proportion of an individual authority's income from council taxes is made up of any particular component.

Region	Budget requirement (including parish precepts) £ million	Income from non-domestic rate £ million	Per cent.	Council tax requirement £ million	Per cent.
The South-West	3,180	1,140	36	900	28
West Midlands	4,020	1,260	31	910	23
Yorkshire	3,800	1,190	31	850	22
North-west	5,560	1,650	30	1,280	23
The North	2,090	620	30	470	23
East Midlands	2,850	970	34	680	24
East Anglia	1,370	500	37	340	25
London	7,270	1,670	23	1,460	20
The South-East	7,390	2,580	35	2,050	28
England	37,530	11,580	31	8,930	24

Notes:
The budget requirement is the amount authorities have budgeted to receive from revenue support grant, non-domestic rates and council taxes.
The income from non-domestic rates is the amount of redistributed non-domestic rates payable to an authority's general fund.
The council tax requirement either *(a)* includes income required to cover any estimated deficit on the collection fund brought forward from 1992-93 or *(b)* excludes income met from an estimated surplus on the collection fund brought forward from 1992-93.

THORP

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer by the President of the Board of Trade of 25 May, *Official Report*, column *488*, if he will make a statement on the current timing of the decision in respect of revised discharge authorisations in connection with the commissioning of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield.

Mr. Yeo: We have received the report of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the radiological inspectorate of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on their public consultation on the draft authorisations for the Sellafield site including THORP. My right hon. Friends the Secretary of State and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food are currently considering it.

Nature Conservation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce new powers for local authorities to protect sites of nature conservation interest.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 7 June to the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger), *Official Report*, column *101*.

Radioactive Discharge Limits, Sellafield

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has recieved on resolutions submitted to the Paris Commission on sea dumping on Sellafield's radioactive discharge limits for its annual meeting in Berlin on 14 to 19 June.

Mr. Yeo: As part of the normal distribution of papers for the Berlin meeting, my officials have received copies of recommendations tabled by the Danish and Irish delegations. Both recommendations make reference to discharges from Sellafield.

Gulf Ecology

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) of 19 May, *Official Report*, column *182*, if he will place in the Library a copy of the United Nations environmental programme on ecology in the Gulf.

Mr. Yeo: A copy has been placed in the Library.

"Today" Interview

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a copy of his interview on BBC Radio Four's "Today" programme on 1 June.

Mr. Gummer: No.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what regulations govern the direct disposal of solid radioactive wastes to the sewage system from university laboratories; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: Disposals of any radioactive waste to the sewage system must be authorised under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960, unless the level of radioactivity is so low that the waste is covered by one of the exemptions to the Act. Authorisations are granted subject to such limitations and conditions as the regulator, the chief inspector of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, thinks fit.

Self-build Housing

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what proportion of the United Kingdom housing budget allocated to self-build housing was taken up in percentage and money terms in the latest year for which figures are available;

(2) what proportion of the United Kingdom housing budget was allocated to self-build housing in the United Kingdom in percentage and money terms; and what percentage was taken up in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 27 May 1993]:* Within the United Kingdom housing budget there is no specific allocation made to support self-build housing. Therefore the figures requested are unavailable.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are taken to ensure that the money allocated for self-build housing is available both to individual and to self-build groups.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 27 May 1993]:* In England the Housing Corporation has a statutory function to promote and assist the development of self-build groups and help to arrange advantageous private finance for these groups. The corporation may also pay Housing Association Grant to self-build groups who are registered housing associations.

Office of Water Services

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with OFWAT as to the cost of water in the next financial year; and what are the criteria by which he will decide on the level of 'K' in OFWAT's price fixing.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* My right hon. Friend's predecessors have from time to time had discussions with the Director General of Water Services. Under the Water Industry Act 1991 the Director General has the duty to set limits to the prices companies may charge: my right hon. Friend has no powers to interfere in any way with the exercise of that responsibility.

The 1993-94 price limits have already been settled and are being implemented by the companies. The companies' licences set out the criteria for the scope of variations in price limits between periodic reviews. The Director General has published a number of consultation papers concerning his approach to setting price limits at the first full review in 1994, which will take effect from 1 April 1995. Under section 2 of the Water Industry Act 1991, the Director General must enable companies to obtain the funds to finance their duties while protecting the interests of their customers.

Rural Planning Permissions

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to repeal the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to ensure that more consideration is given to environmental concerns during the consideration of planning permission by rural local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* Town and Country Planning legislation together with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 ensures that full account is taken of the likely effects that development proposals would have on the environment. Guidance to local authorities and others on how the conservation of our natural heritage is to be reflected in land use planning and development control is set out in circulars 27/87 and 1/92. This will be updated in a planning policy guidance note, to be issued shortly. Nature conservation issues are frequently a material consideration in determining planning applications, especially those in or near sites of special scientific interest.

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the cost to date and the expected future cost of his Department's market-testing programme; how many staff are engaged full time in work relating to market testing; which firms of consultants have been used in connection with the market-testing programme; and how they were selected.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* The total cost of the programme to date has amounted to approximately £1,329,000. It is not possible to estimate the future cost of my Department's programme.

There are 11 staff in my Department directly assigned to the market-testing programme.

My Department has used the following consultancy services to assist in the development of the market testing process since November 1991.

Dr. Alan Kemp
Shreeveport
Simon Thorpe Consultancy
Hoskyns Group plc
Prime Strategy Consultants
Symonds
Capita Management Consultancy
Coopers and Lybrand
Smith and Williamson
Mr. P. Dworkin
Touche Ross
Peter Burholt Consultancy Ltd.
Lane Whittlesey Business Consultants
Mouncy and Partners

The consultants were selected using the normal departmental competitive tendering procedures, with the exception of Dr. Kemp, who was at the time already employed as a special adviser to the then Secretary of State.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce the merging of the National Rivers Authority with Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 8 June 1993]:* The 1992 Conservative manifesto committed the Government to bringing together the key regulatory functions of the National Rivers Authority and Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, and waste regulation functions of local authorities, in a new Environment Agency. The required legislation will be introduced as soon as the necessary parliamentary time can be found.

EC Environment Council

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he plans to put forward at the EC Environment Council meeting in Aarhus on 14 to 16 May.

Mr. Yeo: The meeting in Aarhus, at which my hon. Friend the then Minister for the Environment and Countryside represented the United Kingdom, was an

informal Council. Ministers discussed three topics proposed by the Danish Presidency: transport and the environment, the review of the structural funds regulations, and employment and the environment. No formal conclusions were adopted nor decisions taken.

SCOTLAND

River Tay (Floods)

13. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the flood problems of the River Tay; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: More than 40 representations about flooding in Tayside have been received since the flooding in January. Most advocated that some form of flood management should be developed.

I am pleased to say that Tayside regional council has commissioned a comprehensive study of the Tay catchment which will enable flood management, warning and defence strategies to be assessed against criteria of cost and effectiveness.

For our part, the Government have agreed to meet 50 per cent. of eligible fees and associated expenses for the study up to a maximum contribution of £110,000.

Local Government

1. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how he intends to announce the future of local councils in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: I intend to announce my decisions on the new structure of local government in Scotland in a White Paper to be published before the summer recess.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his plans for the role of community councils in the structure of local government in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 7 June 1993]*: Community councils can play a very effective representational role on behalf of their local communities. The second consultation paper "Shaping the New Councils" invited comments on the role of community councils. We are still considering the views expressed and any proposals to change the existing role of community councils will be announced later.

Construction Industry

16. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people are currently employed in the construction industry in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: The latest provisional estimates indicate that 114,500 people were employed in the Scottish construction industry in December 1992.

Training

17. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairmen of the enterprise companies in Scotland to discuss the funding of training programmes.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend and I frequently meet chairmen of local enterprise companies to discuss a range of economic development and training issues.

18. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairman of Scottish Enterprise to discuss training.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend and I met the chairman of Scottish Enterprise on 26 April 1993 to discuss a range of issues including training.

36. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the employment training programme in Kilmarnock and Loudoun and Ayrshire.

Mr. Stewart: This is a matter for Scottish Enterprise, which has a statutory duty to keep under continuous review the suitability and adequacy of such training where its provision is delegated to other bodies, such as local enterprise companies and their agents. Employment training was replaced by training for work on 1 April 1993.

Quangos

19. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of people he appoints to quangos and the total remuneration given to them.

Mr. Lang: As at 1 September last year, I made just under 4,000 public appointments. The majority of them are not paid. For those where a salary is paid, the total amount of remuneration, at the same date, was £2·1 million. This figure does not include a number of appointments which are fee paid and where, of course, the amount of fee depends on the days of attendance.

Graduates' Employment

20. **Dr. Bray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of graduates in Scotland gained a permanent home employment by 31 December after graduation in 1988-89 and in 1990-91.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Fifty-seven per cent. of those graduating in 1988-89 were in or had firm offers of employment by 31 December 1989. Of those graduating in 1990-91, 46 per cent. were in or had offers of such employment by 31 December 1991.

Gross Domestic Product

21. **Mr. Peter Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the gross domestic product per head in Scotland between the years 1981 and 1990.

Mr. Stewart: In current prices, GDP per head in Scotland in 1981 was £3,542. In 1990, it was £7,747. After allowing for inflation, this represents a real increase of 30 per cent.

Ferry Services

22. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on ferry services to the Scottish islands.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my right hon. Friend earlier today to the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham).

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements have been made to engage consultants to look at the privatisation of Caledonian MacBrayne; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my right hon. Friend on 26 May, *Official Report*, column *589*, to the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson).

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy on the development of a roll-on roll-off ferry service between Scotland and northern Europe.

Mr. Stewart: The development of any service, and the choice of location of the relevant ferry port, must be a matter for the commercial judgment of the potential operator. As the hon. Member is aware from my letter to him of 8 January this year, Scottish Enterprise has commissioned consultants to estimate the financial, economic and environmental impacts of developing new east coast port facilities, in response to potential market interest. The final report of the consultants is, I understand, still awaited by Scottish Enterprise.

Defence Procurement

23. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the effect of defence procurement on Scottish industry.

Mr. Stewart: The Ministry of Defence's expenditure in Scotland on equipment in 1990-91 totalled £600 million, which was 8 per cent. of the MOD's total expenditure on equipment within the United Kingdom. It is estimated that MOD's equipment procurement accounted for 1·4 per cent. of Scottish GDP in 1990.

Associated employment in Scotland within contractors supplying MOD direct in 1990-91 was 13,000, 10 per cent. of the United Kingdom total and approximately 0·5 per cent. of the Scottish work force.

Gipsies, Cambuslang

24. **Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action was taken by his Department in connection with the representations made by the hon. Member for Congleton on Monday 10 May relating to gipsy encampments at the Cambuslang industrial estate.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Office contacted the Crown Office, which confirmed that the police and the relevant local authority were aware of the situation. I understand that the level of activity on the industrial estate was not sufficient to warrant further action at that time.

Local Services

25. **Mr. McMaster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of public bodies to discuss the provision of local services.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend last met the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on 18 January 1993.

Forestry Commission

26. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent discussions he has held on the future of the Forestry Commission.

Sir Hector Monro: My right hon. Friend regularly meets individuals and organisations with interests in forestry to hear their views and discuss matters of mutual concern. In these discussions, issues such as the future of the Forestry Commission naturally arise.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether primary legislation is required if a decision is made to privatise the Forestry Commission in whole or part.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 26 May 1993]:* Ministers have come to no decisions about the effectiveness of the current incentives for forestry investment or the ownership and management of Forestry Commission woodlands, which are the subject of review. Only once they have done so would they consider any consequent requirements for primary legislation.

National Environmental Agency

27. **Mr. Connarty:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what changes in responsibility or statutory duties he envisages for local authorities following the setting up of a national environmental agency in Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) by my right hon. Friend on 25 February, *Official Report*, column *722*.

We plan to transfer to the proposed Scottish environment protection agency the existing district and islands councils' responsibilities in Scotland for waste regulation and local authority air pollution control under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the islands councils' responsibilities as river purification authorities.

Southern General Hospital, Edinburgh

28. **Mr. Eric Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the expected starting date and completion date of the new Southern general hospital in Edinburgh.

Mr. Stewart: Policy on the provision of a new teaching hospital in Edinburgh is a matter primarily for Lothian health board, subject to public consultation and the approval of my right hon. and noble Friend. I understand that Lothian health board plans to issue proposals for public consultation in due course.

Road Haulage

29. **Mrs. Adams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what safety restrictions he has laid down for movements of very large loads and convoys by road in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Secretary of State for Scotland lays down no safety restrictions for the movement of very large loads and convoys. In the United Kingdom, the Secretary of State for Transport is responsible for authorising abnormal indivisible load movements.

Water

30. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he now expects to make a statement on his policy on the future of the water industry in Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: A decision on the future structure of water and sewerage services will be made when responses to the consultation have been fully considered. My right hon. Friend will make a statement in due course.

32. **Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many of the submissions he has received to his consultation document on water and sewerage have been from the 10 regional water companies in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 22 March, *Official Report*, column *474*.

Damp Housing

31. **Mr. Davidson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he intends to take to measure and reduce the health risk to children living in damp public sector housing.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In preparing their next housing plans and housing capital programmes, due by the end of August, all local housing authorities have been asked to set out strategies and targets for tackling housing in their areas subject to condensation and dampness.

Voluntary Organisations (Grants)

33. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the value of grants from his Department to voluntary organisations in each of the past three years, at constant prices.

Mr. Stewart: Grants paid to voluntary organisations by the Scottish Office in each of the last three years at 1991-92 prices, were £20·2 million in 1990-91, £20·7 million in 1991-92 and £24·7 million in 1992-93.

Stobhill Hospital, Glasgow

34. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will next meet the Greater Glasgow health board to discuss the future of Stobhill hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no immediate plans to meet with Greater Glasgow health board to discuss Stobhill or any other hospital that is subject to the board's comprehensive review of acute and maternity services. He looks forward to receiving the board's detailed proposals in due course.

Angling

35. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the significance of the field sport of angling to the economy of Scotland; and what measures he is taking to encourage the sport.

Sir Hector Monro: I have made no assessment of the significance of the field sport of angling to the economy of Scotland. However, the governing body for angling received grants totalling over £30,000 from the Scottish Sports Council in 1991-92. In common with all other sports, the governing body has full autonomy and the responsibility for increasing participation and improving standards of angling in Scotland.

Homelessness

37. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his plans to deal with the homeless in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Local authorities have the statutory responsibility for dealing with homelessness. Their capital allocations this year total £513 million and homelessness is one of the three key issues which housing authorities have been asked to address in their housing strategies and output targets. In addition, the Government have made available extra capital allocations of almost £23 million earmarked for homelessness projects over the period 1991 to 1993.

Labour Statistics

38. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of the work force in each of Scotland's new towns is currently unemployed.

Mr. Stewart: Statistics for the area of each new town are not maintained by the Department of Employment. The following percentages have been provided by the development corporation:

	per cent.
Cumbernauld	9·7
East Kilbride	8·9
Glenrothes	11·7
Irvine	13·3
Livingston	9·0

Education Spending

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much is spent on average per pupil at *(a)* primary school level and *(b)* secondary school level; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In 1991-92, the latest year for which figures are available, net current expenditure per pupil in Scottish primary schools was £1,633. The comparable figure for secondary schools was £2,834. These figures do not include the cost of home to school transport, school meals, education authority central administration and loan charges.

Council Tax

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the average council tax payment due in each district council area in Scotland in the current financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* The table gives, for each district and islands council area in Scotland, estimates of the average amount of council tax billed per inhabitable dwelling in 1993-94. The amount billed includes district and region council taxes and excludes council water charges. In calculating the average, no

allowance has been made for the effects of council tax transitional relief and council tax benefit in reducing the amounts that have to be paid.

Council tax, amount billed per dwelling, Scotland: 1993-94

Authority	*Amount billed* £
Borders	
Berwickshire	361
Ettrick and Lauderdale	385
Roxburgh	362
Tweeddale	433
Central	
Clackmannan	457
Falkirk	378
Stirling	556
Dumfries and Galloway	
Annandale and Eskdale	422
Nithsdale	423
Stewartry	394
Wigtown	400
Fife	
Dunfermline	448
Kirkcaldy	443
North East Fife	542
Grampian	
Aberdeen City	456
Banff and Buchan	370
Gordon	459
Kincardine and Deeside	451
Moray	361
Highland	
Badenoch and Strathspey	407
Caithness	346
Inverness	422
Lochaber	445
Nairn	458
Ross and Cromarty	440
Skye and Lochalsh	415
Sutherland	366
Lothian	
East Lothian	529
Edinburgh City	583
Midlothian	485
West Lothian	409
Strathclyde	
Argyll and Bute	440
Bearsden and Milngavie	590
Clydebank	424
Clydesdale	445
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	396
Cumnock and Doon Valley	370
Cunninghame	393
Dumbarton	493
East Kilbride	463
Eastwood	515
Glasgow City	458
Hamilton	440
Inverclyde	396
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	393
Kyle and Carrick	533
Monklands	415
Motherwell	380
Renfrew	456
Strathkelvin	531
Tayside	
Angus	403
Dundee City	459
Perth and Kinross	473
Orkney	301
Shetland	298
Western Isles	319
Scotland	454

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what information he has concerning council tax appeals being made in each local authority area for the latest date for which information is available;

(2) how many proposals for changes in council tax banding have so far been made to valuation offices in each local authority; and what proportion of households this represents.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 8 June 1993]:* This information is not yet available centrally.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his Department's forecast of the number of people in Scotland who were previously exempted from paying the community charge on the grounds of severe mental impairment and who *(a)* are liable for the water charge element of the council tax, *(b)* are liable for all or part of the property element of the council tax or *(c)* will be in receipt of 100 per cent. council tax benefit for the property element.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 25 May 1993]:* Such estimates are not available. My Department does not make estimates concerning the personal circumstances of persons who may be liable to pay the council tax.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his Department's assessment of the number of people in Scotland who *(a)* will be in receipt of 100 per cent. council tax benefit for the property element of the tax and *(b)* will be exempt from payment of the personal element of the council tax on the grounds of severe mental impairment.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 25 May 1993]:* My Department does not make any assessment of the circumstances of people entitled to council tax benefit.

Councillors (Payments)

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to increase the level of payments to elected members of local authorities for *(a)* attendance, *(b)* special responsibility, *(c)* travelling and *(d)* subsistence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* All the payments to members of local authorities by way of allowances and travel and subsistence were increased earlier this year. The comments received from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on the first year's operation of the new system introduced in April 1991 are being considered in the wider context of local government reform and the review of internal management.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were waiting for urgent hospital treatment in each major specialty at 31 March in each regional health authority.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* Available information about waiting lists and waiting times is published quarterly in the "NHS Patient Treatment and Waiting Time Bulletin", copies of which are in the Library of the House. The information collected does not classify patients according to degree of urgency: this is for individual clinicians' judgment. We do know, however, that about half of all admissions are immediate, and that about half of all waiting list admissions are within four weeks.

Public Appointments

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list each occasion since 1987 when his Department has *(a)* appointed and *(b)* successfully nominated Michael Hirst to non-departmental public bodies; which such positions he currently holds; what salary, honoraria or allowances are attached to these positions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* Sir Michael Hirst was appointed to the board of governors of the Queen's college, Glasgow in 1989 for the period to 31 December 1992. The position carried no salary or fee. The college is now part of Glasgow Caledonian university and is no longer a non-departmental public body. Sir Michael has not held and does not currently hold any other appointment to a non-departmental public body in Scotland and my Department has not nominated him for membership of any other non-departmental public body.

Nurse Education

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he announced the proposal to review nurse education; what date he set at that time for announcing the results of this review; and when he now expects to make this announcement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 27 May 1993]:* Following the announcement by my right hon. Friend on 24 July 1992 that NHS trust status was no longer an option for colleges of nursing and midwifery currently managed by health boards, general managers were advised on 24 September 1992 that they should continue meanwhile to be responsible for the management of the colleges. At that time the Home and Health and Education Departments were instructed to under a review. Its aim was to assess the educational and financial implications of the broad range of options for the future management and resourcing of nursing and midwifery education in Scotland, with particular reference to the role of the NHS and further and higher education. While, at that time, it was hoped to reach firmer conclusions by the end of the financial year 1992-93, complex issues have emerged which require very careful consideration and in-depth scrutiny. The review is almost complete. Once the implications of the various options have been considered, my right hon. Friend will advise health boards of his decisions.

Cockles

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what changes in legislation he envisages to extend the ban on cockle fishing by boat to land-based cockle tractors;

(2) what representations he has received on extending the ban on cockle fishing by boat to land-based cockle tractors; and how many were satisfied and unsatisfied with present arrangements.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* Cockle dredging by boat is subject to control under the provisions of the Inshore Fishing (Scotland) Act 1984. This legislation is kept under review. A number of representations have been received suggesting that similar powers be taken to control land-based cockle tractors. However, there are no current proposals to amend this legislation.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the operation of land-based cockle tractors during the ban on cockle fishing by boat; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* I am aware that land-based dredging takes place and of the strong local feelings to which this can give rise. Where it is judged to be a public nuisance, local authorities can promote byelaws to control or prohibit it.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what powers are available to him to control the dredging of cockle beds by land-based cockle tractors during the ban on cockle fishing by boat; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he intends to delay the resumption of cockle fishing by boat in order to allow sufficient recuperation time for cockle beds which have been dredged by land-based cockle tractors; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what further steps he intends to take to enforce a total ban on cockling; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what steps he is taking to keep the total ban on cockle fishing by boat under review; and what plans he has to extend the ban to land-based cockle tractors.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* The Inshore Fishing (Scotland) Act 1984 gives powers to control fishing activities from vessels in Scottish inshore waters. However, these powers do not extend to land-based activities. If land-based dredging activities are judged to be a public nuisance, local authorities can promote byelaws to control or prohibit them.

There is no evidence that a total ban on cockle fishing from vessels in Scottish inshore waters is justified and none is in force. Local management measures are introduced as and when circumstances require them. Such measures are reviewed regularly, taking account of scientific assessments of stock levels and the views of interested parties.

Housing

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has concerning the building of homes by housing associations in *(a)* Inverclyde, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole over the next three years; and what proportion of these dwellings is to be let to those people with (i) physical disabilities and (ii) learning disabilities.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 8 June 1993]:* This information is not collected centrally. The assessment and funding of development proposals by

housing associations are matters for Scottish Homes and private lenders and the hon. Member may wish to pursue the matter with Scottish Homes.

Agricultural Research and Development

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what funds, in cash and constant prices, were allocated to the Scottish Department of Agriculture, research and development budgets for each year since 1978; what is the projected spending for 1993-94 and 1994-95; and what proportion of the departmental budget for research and development is accounted for by *(a)* the Central Science Laboratory, *(b)* the Veterinary Medicines Directorate, *(c)* the Central Veterinary Laboratory and *(d)* ADAS.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 8 June 1993]:* Successive volumes of the Cabinet Office "Annual Review of Government Funded Research and Development" contain information on outturn and planned expenditure by the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department on agriculture and fisheries research and development from 1977-78 onwards. Relevant figures extracted from the review are shown in the table. It should be noted that, for 1981-82 and later years, the figures are presented on a full economic cost basis.

	Cash £ million	*Constant price[1] £ million*
1977-78	18·2	55·3
1978-79	20·8	57·0
1979-80	23·6	55·4
1980-81	29·1	57·8
1981-82	36·2	65·5
1982-83	38·1	64·4
1983-84	41·3	66·7
1984-85	43·6	67·0
1985-86	44·6	65·0
1986-87	42·5	60·0
1987-88	41·2	55·2
1988-89	44·8	55·9
1989-90	47·3	55·4
1990-91	49·6	54·7
1991-92	51·7	53·5
1992-93	51·7	51·7
1993-94	54·1	n.a.
1994-95	55·5	n.a.

[1] At constant 1992-93 prices using the GDP deflator.

The Central Veterinary Laboratory currently holds a subcontract—value £7,800—for one of the Department's commissioned agricultural research and development projects.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were employed, for each year since 1978, directly by the Scottish Department of Agriculture on research and development programmes related to agriculture, fisheries and food; and how many people were employed, for each year since 1978, on Scottish Department of Agriculture research and development programmes commissioned from outside.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 8 June 1993]:* It is not possible to answer the first part of the question directly because the amount of time spent by relevant Scottish Office staff on research and development (R and D) programmes in the areas in question varies from time to time and from individual to individual.

However, for the period since 1981 the total staff numbers at the Department's Fisheries Research Services (FRS), at which the most substantial relevant R and D effort is carried out, have been as follows:

	Number
1981	248·5
1982	252·0
1983	256·0
1984	259·0
1985	257·5
1986	252·5
1987	254·5
1988	252·5
1989	255·0
1990	256·0
1991	252·0
1992	254·5
1993	256·0

(Figures for earlier years cannot be readily extracted).

Less than 10 per cent. of the overall effort of the Scottish Agricultural Science Agency (SASA)—whose staff are also directly employed by the Department—are on R and D and no members of staff are exclusively engaged on it.

Most of the non-R and D activities at FRS and SASA consist of monitoring, and the provision of scientific and technological advice and information to Government and other bodies.

Almost all of the Department's programme of agricultural and related R and D is carried out at the Scottish agricultural research institutes (SARIs), the Scottish agricultural college (SAC), and the royal botanic garden, Edinburgh (RBGE) which employ their own staff. Total staff numbers in the SARIs for the period from 1978 are as follows:

	Number
1978	1,397
1979	1,376
1980	1,345
1981	1,331
1982	1,338
1983	1,323
1984	1,328
1985	1,299
1986	1,390
1987	1,275
1988	1,176
1989	1,100
1990	1,179
1991	1,231
1992	1,270
1993	1,275

The number of SAC and RBGE staff wholly or partly engaged in research and development for the years 1989 to 1993 is as follows:

Year	*SAC*	*RBGE*
1989	301	46
1990	299	47
1991	270	48
1992	272	46·5
1993	270	47

Information on earlier years is not held centrally.

DEFENCE

French Security Services

Mr Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has made to his French counterpart on activities by the French security services in relation to British defence manufacturers.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave on 7 June, *Official Report*, column *12*.

Departmental Vehicles

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what evaluation exercises were carried out to test the fire-resistant properties of the truck cargo heavy duty vehicles used by his Department.

Mr. Aitken: The truck cargo heavy duty vehicles are constructed from proprietary materials that have fire resistant properties. An engineering assessment has been undertaken which shows that the vehicles will resist fires to which they may be subjected.

Defence Equipment Exhibition

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the companies exhibiting products or services at this year's Royal Navy and British Army equipment exhibition; and how many of these companies are from outside the United Kingdom.

Mr. Aitken: The list of exhibitors has not yet been finalised, but is expected to number some 150.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what effects the road blocks established by Croatian forces around the village of Krusica have had on the assistance being given by the Prince of Wales's Own Regiment to the provision of humanitarian aid to the civilian population in that area of Bosnia-Herzegovina; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: A well-organised group of Bosnian Croat women have established a road block on the only road into the village of Kruscica, and are preventing Prince of Wales's Own Regiment and the UNHCR from crossing it to deliver aid. British forces on the ground are monitoring the situation within the village of Kruscica closely and they assess that the population of Kruscica, who are resourceful and resolute, are surviving well; some aid does reach the village via mountain tracks and as crops near harvest more food will become available. British forces also assess that it would be unwise to try to use force to cross the road block because it would probably destabilise an already volatile situation.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 10 June 1993

EDUCATION

Key Stage 3

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the weight and the number of packages involved in delivering the key stage 3 material to the average secondary school in England; and what assessment he has made of the capacity of such schools to store this material.

Mr. Robin Squire: The weight and number of packages of the tests delivered will depend on the size of the school. A typical school would need approximately 1,900 test papers and associated mark schemes in English, maths, science, and technology for all their pupils undergoing key stage 3 testing. This would weigh approximately 99 kgs.

As they were delivered shortly before the start of the tests, storage of the papers should not pose a long-term problem.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what percentage of schools conducted key stage 3 tests on 7 June; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what percentage of 14-year-olds sat key stage 3 tests on 7 June; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Patten: Precise information is not yet available. Parents and the public more widely will rightly question why all schools did not administer the test which was a sound and straightforward basis on which to measure pupils' reading and writing skills. It provides vital information for teachers to help children who are failing in these areas. Schools which carried out the test will gain a clear idea of how their pupils perform in reading and writing against national standards.

ENVIRONMENT

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent communications he has received from the chairman of British Nuclear Fuels plc in regard to the future of radioactive waste arising from THORP.

Mr. Yeo: The chairman of British Nuclear Fuels plc has written to the Secretary of State on only one recent occasion, about the timing of authorisations for the Sellafield site.

Electoral Registers (Sale)

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information his Department has concerning the amounts of money raised by local electoral authorities through the sale of electoral registers.

Mr. Baldry: The information is not available centrally.

Beach Awards

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the national beach awards made by the Tidy Britain Group.

Mr. Yeo: The seaside awards scheme was introduced by the Tidy Britain group (TGB) in 1992. It recognises beaches which have attained high standards of facilities, management, beach cleanliness and the water quality requirements of the Bathing Water Directive (76/160/EEC). At present only those beaches which are entered for the scheme are considered for awards.

My Department supports TBG in its operation of this awards scheme which encourages high standards at both resort and rural beaches. The criteria by which entrants are judged are exacting and in some cases more stringent than for the Blue Flag scheme for resorts.

This year's awards, announced on 3 June, were presented by my noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment on 7 June. One hundred and thirty-three beaches received awards compared with 94 last year.

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the standard spending assessments of each district council in England and Wales as a sum per head of population numbered in descending order.

Mr. Baldry: The information requested for English shire district councils, has been placed in the Library.

Minister for Merseyside

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce the name of the new Minister with special responsibility for Merseyside.

Mr. Gummer: Shortly.

Poll Tax

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has of the amount of unpaid poll tax; what measures he is taking to encourage local authorities to collect the outstanding payments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* I estimate that the level of community charge arrears for local authorities in England at 31 March 1993 was £2·4 billion. Authorities have, however, made provision for non-collection of £1·6 billion.

We have provided authorities with a range of enforcement options. Once it has obtained a liability order from a court an authority may collect unpaid community charges by any of the following methods: an attachment of earnings order; distress; deductions from income support; charging orders (for collective community charges only); and bankruptcy and winding up. If, having attempted to levy distress, an authority is unable to find any or sufficient goods to distrain, it may seek to have the chargepayer committed to prison.

Common Land

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement of his policy in relation to common land.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 8 June 1993]:* It remains our policy to safeguard the status of common land and to strengthen the ways in which we protect and use it. We recognise that this policy requires legislation but I cannot say when such legislation will be introduced.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Drugs and Arms

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what direct involvement Her Majesty's Customs has had in the three discoveries of cannabis on a location off the west Wales coast over the last three weeks; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what action he proposes to take to increase surveillance to prevent importation of drugs and arms on the west Wales coast.

Sir John Cope: The bales of cannabis were trawled from the seabed by a fishing vessel and the master promptly and correctly notified Customs on each occasion. Customs subsequently took possession of the cannabis when the trawler returned to port at Milford Haven.

Customs are constantly vigilant to prevent the importation of both drugs and arms on the west Wales coast as elsewhere and they deploy anti-smuggling teams, based at Swansea and Pembroke dock, to meet the assessed risk of such smuggling.

The Customs strategy in relation to anti-smuggling controls is based on flexible targeting of resources towards areas of the highest risk at any given time.

Debt Reduction

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on his policy on the United States proposal to join the international consensus on debt reduction on Trinidad terms.

Mr. Nelson: The Government very much welcome the announcement by the United States Administration that it is seeking congressional approval for measures to enable the United States to join the Paris Club consensus for the implementation of debt reduction on Trinidad terms for the poorest and most indebted countries.

Debt reduction on Trinidad terms was originally proposed by the Prime Minister in 1990.

A modified version of the Prime Minister's Trinidad terms proposals, implemented by the Paris Club from December 1991, provide for 50 per cent. reduction in the debt payments due over a period of between one and three years. They also provide for consideration of the question of the country's whole stock of debt after three to four years, subject to satisfactory performance under IMF programmes.

Approval of the legislation and necessary appropriation measures by Congress should allow the United States to give the 50 per cent. debt or debt service reduction under the Trinidad terms as presently implemented. The United States proposal should also allow the United States to participate in a Paris Club stock of debt reduction.

If the United States is able to implement Trinidad terms this is good news. It implies full international consensus at the Paris Club in favour of debt reduction. Moreover this should also facilitate in due course progress on other key objectives of the United Kingdom's strategy for official debt.

The Government would like the present Trinidad terms improved so that they conform more closely to the proposals that my right hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) actually put forward in Trinidad in 1990. In particular, we would like to see:

- an increase in the rate of relief in excess of 50 per cent. on a case-by-case basis. For some countries, relief of up to 80 per cent. might be justified;
- where a debtor has a good track record of performance under IMF programmes, immediate stock of debt relief should be given. There should be no need to have to wait three to four years.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Hong Kong

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the progress of the Sino-British talks on the future of Hong Kong.

Mr. Hurd: There have now been four rounds of talks between Britain and China about electoral arrangements in Hong Kong. We have the responsibility to ensure that the elections to be held in 1994 and 1995 are fair, open and acceptable to the people of Hong Kong. There should also be objective criteria for confirmation of members of the 1995 Legislative Council as members of the first legislature of the Hong Kong special administrative region in 1997. We are working hard for a successful outcome from the talks. But we also need to ensure that the elections are held on time. The talks will therefore need to be brought to a conclusion in good time to allow the practical arrangements for the elections to be made; they cannot go on indefinitely. We must make more progress.

Serbia

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to discuss recent political events in Serbia with the Federal Yugoslav representative in London; and if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's view of recent developments in the Yugoslav Federation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None. Recent developments in Belgrade were discussed at the EC General Affairs Council in Luxembourg on 8 and 9 June. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and his European colleagues condemned the repression evident in Serbia, in particular the physical abuse of the opposition leader, Mr. Draskovic and his wife, and the moves to ban opposition parties.

Latvia

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Latvian Foreign Minister about the development of democracy in that country and the position of the ethnic Russian minority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: At the EC Troika ministerial meeting with Baltic Foreign Ministers on 19 April, we and our partners acknowledged the progress on political reform which Latvia had made. We also reiterated the importance we attach to the upholding of human rights. We do not accept Russian allegations of human rights abuses in Latvia, which have been shown to be unfounded by CSCE and UN fact-finding missions. However, Latvia needs to find fair formulae on citizenship and non-citizens' rights. We have urged Latvia to implement soon the recommendations of the report on Latvia by the CSCE high commissioner on national minorities.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports his Department has received on the conduct of the recent elections in Latvia; what were the nature of such reports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The elections were the first to have been held since Latvia regained independence. We are pleased that they were conducted successfully. Her Majesty's embassy in Riga has reported that the Council of Europe mission observing the elections concluded that they were free, democratic and independent.

Greece

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the Foreign Minister of Greece; what issues were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs last met Mr. Papaconstantinou at the Foreign Affairs Council on 8 June.

Among the topics discussed were the former Yugoslavia, EC enlargement, structural funds and the GATT Uruguay round.

Asylum

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the United Kingdom post in Zagreb received from Mrs. Sadeta Draganovic and her children an application to be granted asylum in the United Kingdom; when that application was forwarded to the immigration and nationality department of the Home Office; if the post in Zagreb received information as to whether a decision on the application has been taken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Her Majesty's embassy in Zagreb received an application for entry clearance by Mrs. Draganovic on 28 April 1993. This was referred to the Home Office the same day. To date the embassy has received no response.

Angola

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action the Government are taking to ensure that legitimate government in Angola is maintained.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We fully support United Nations efforts to promote dialogue between the democratically elected Government of Angola and UNITA leading to a ceasefire and full implementation of the Bicesse Peace Accords. On 1 June the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations operation in Angola for 45 days to allow these efforts to continue.

Somalia

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with *(a)* representatives of non-Governmental organisations and *(b)* with commonwealth high commissioners about recent developments in Somalia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We maintain regular and close contacts with NGO's about the situation in Somalia, including the recent developments. Officials have been in contact with individual Commonwealth High Commissions.

We have also expressed our condolences over the recent tragic death of Pakistani United Nations troops in Somalia.

Malawi

Mr. Spring: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy towards the referendum in Malawi on 14 June.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We sent three observers to Malawi as part of a coordinated EC mission to monitor the referendum voter registration process beween 12 and 21 April. A further five United Kingdom observers arrived in Malawi on 3 June where they will remain until 18 June to monitor the latter stages of the referendum process, including the vote and declaration of the result. In addition, we have agreed to provide financial support through the United Nations development programme to supply equipment necessary for the holding of the referendum.

We are supporting the referendum process despite a number of concerns over reports of harassment, intimidation of individual multi-party advocates and lack of coverage of their views on the government controlled media. However we are encouraged that all the parties remain committed to continued participation in the referendum process. We have urged the Government of Malawi to ensure that the remainder of the campaign takes place under conditions which allow all Malawians to express their views freely.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Corrections Corporation of America

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the expected publication date of the report of the prison service investigation into the American prison firm CCA.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the prison service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated June 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about publication of the report of our investigation into CCA.

Following various allegations about CCA in the media, the Prisons Board decided that one of its non-executive members, Mr. Bill Bentley, should visit the United States and investigate the background to these allegations. The results of Mr. Bentley's inquiries have been presented to the Board; in brief, he concludes that he was unable to find any evidence which would have affected the decision to award the contract from Blakenhurst Prison to UKDS, the consortium which includes CCA.

This conclusion has been accepted by Mr. Peter Lloyd, the Prisons Minister, who has written to Sir Ivan Lawrence reporting the outcome of the inquiry. A copy of that letter has been placed in the Library of the House. Beyond that, we have no plans to publish a report on Mr. Bentley's investigation.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will delay the opening of Blakenhurst prison pending the outcome of the prison service investigation into CCA.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the prison service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated June 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the opening of Blakenhurst Prison.

Our initial review concluded that no information about CCA had come to light which would have affected our decision to award the contract to the UKDS, the consortium which includes CCA.

The opening of Blakenhurst Prison therefore went ahead as scheduled, with the first inmates arriving on 26 May.

Relocation and Amalgamation

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the sections and organisations within his Department for which there are plans for relocation or amalgamation.

Mr. Howard: The Home Office has no major relocation or amalgamation plans at present, but a number of minor moves are being planned. In particular, the central research and support establishment will move from Aldermaston to forensic science service headquarters in Birmingham and the prison service tactical management and planning unit (TMPU) will move from Birmingham to London, both in September 1993. TMPU will also be amalgamated with the prison service headquarters section responsible for the managements of category A prisoners.

Drug Abuse

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he plans to take to eliminate Temazepan capsule abuse.

Mr. David Maclean: The Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) has recently completed consultations on its proposed changes in the controls over Temazepam and I expect shortly to receive its conclusions.

Manchester Prison

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether any member of the initial Manchester gaol tender evaluation panel has been recruited by any of the firms involved in submitting tenders for running that prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the prison service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated June 1993.

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question whether any member of the panel evaluating the bids for the management of Manchester prison has been recruited by any of the firms involved in submitting tenders.

No actual or proposed member of the evaluation panel has been recruited by any of the tendering companies.

Security Guard Uniforms

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take legislative action to prevent the staff of security companies from being uniformed so as to resemble police officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: It is already an offence under section 52 of the Police Act 1964 to impersonate a police officer with intent to deceive.

North Sea Camp Prison

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what savings would be made by using prisoners at HMP North Sea camp to drive lorries to deliver vegetables to other prisoners:

(2) what plans there are to use convicted inmates as lorry drivers at HMP North Sea camp; what assessment has been made of the security implications; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what discussions have taken place with the Prison Officers Association and the Prison Governors Association about the use of prisoners in jobs previously held by paid staff.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the prison service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 10 June 1993.

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about North Sea Camp.

The Governor of North Sea Camp open prison is examining a proposal to use a suitably qualified prisoner to make vegetable deliveries to neighbouring prisons. This will release a prison auxiliary driver to take more prisoners to work placements in local communities, thus meeting an increased demand for such opportunities.

There would be no financial savings since the auxiliary driver will be employed on other duties.

North Sea Camp holds Category D prisoners who are judged to be able to be trusted not to abscond or commit further offences, and to present little risk to the public.

The governor has consulted widely on the question of the use of prisoners as drivers. Members of the local Branch of the Prison Officers Association have not objected to the scheme. Likewise members of the Prison Governors Association at North Sea Camp have no objection. The governor is continuing to consult governors of neighbouring prisons to which deliveries would be made before he reaches a final decision.

I am not aware of any other schemes which will use prisoners to undertake work previously done by paid staff.

Doncaster Prison

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if a decision has yet been made on the date for sending out tenders for Doncaster prison; who will be sent the tender documents; and what is the closing date for bids.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the prison service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 10 June 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply directly to your question about the tendering arrangements for the management of Doncaster Prison.

The intention is to send out invitations to tender on 16 July 1993 with a closing date for the return of bids in mid September. The composition of the bidders' list will depend upon the response to the notice advertising the tendering exercise in the Official Journal of the European Community and a subsequent qualification assessment of the applicants.

Group 4

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what clauses exist in the present contract with Group 4 escort services to allow renegotiation of the contract; and what would be the additional cost of renegotiating the contract in line with the increased number of prisoner movements;

(2) what talks Group 4 has had with his escort duties; what projections were made about the number of prisoner movements by his Department as the basis for the contract with Group 4 escort services; what are the actual numbers of prisoner movements at the latest available date; and if he plans to amend the contract accordingly.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the prison service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 10 June 1993.

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply directly to your two Parliamentary Questions about the contract for court escort services with Group 4 Services Ltd.

The resources needed for the court escort service depend both on the numbers of prisoners to be escorted and on the distribution of their points of origin and their destination. These were measured in surveys carried out prior to the issue of invitations to tender and immediately prior to contract signature. The contract price was based on the findings of the latter survey.

The contract recognises, however, that costs will vary with the requirement, and mechanisms exist to adjust the contract price in line with changes in requirement. Analysis of the present workload is underway in order to determine whether either the resource levels or the contract price, or both, need adjustment, and, if so by how much.

Murder Cases

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many murder cases in the last two years there has been a delay of *(a)* more than 10 weeks, *(b)* less than 10 weeks, *(c)* less than eight weeks and *(d)* less than four weeks after death before defence solicitors agreed to the release of the victim's body to the family.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I regret that this information is not available. Coroners, with the encouragment of the Home Office, do all they can to keep to the minimum the delay in releasing bodies. I deeply sympathise with the families of victims to whom distress is caused by any delays.

Asylum

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Immigration and Nationality Department received from the visa section of the British embassy in Zabred an application for asylum in the United Kingdom by Mrs. Sadeta Draganovic and her children; when the Immigration and Nationality Department is going to take a decision on this application; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: An application by Mrs. Draganovic and her three sons for visas to join members of their family admitted exceptionally under the special arrangements for ex-detainees was referred by the visa officer to the asylum division of the Immigration and Nationality Department on 28 April. A decision on the application will be made shortly.

EC Immigration Meeting

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the main decisions taken by EC Immigration Ministers meeting recently in Copenhagen.

Mr. Howard: I refer to the answer which I gave the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on 9 June 1993 at column *246*.

Mistreatment of Prisoners

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress of the inquiry into the allegation of mistreatment of prisoners in the United States in establishments controlled by the Corrections Corporation of America.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 17 May 1993]:* Mr. Bentley has now completed his inquiries and has reported his findings to Derek Lewis, the director general of the prison service.

In addition to the original allegations made against CCA and some of its senior management, I understand that consideration has also been given to further allegations contained in *The Observer* newspaper.

From Mr. Bentley's findings it is clear that there is nothing to suggest that CCA or its senior managers are unfit to be shareholders in a company holding the contract to operate Blakenhurst or any other prision. In the circumstances, the contract awarded to UKDS for the operation and management of Blakenhurst prison will continue.

I have written in similar terms today to Sir Ivan Lawrence, Chairman of the Home Affairs Committee. A copy of my letter has been placed in the Library of the House.

Polytetrafluoroethylene

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when his Department and the Department of the Environment will produce a guidance

document on the use of polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) based and composite buildings products both under construction and in existence; what representations on the potential dangers to the public and firefighters of this substance have been made by the joint fire prevention committee of the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council over the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 9 June 1993]:* The research to establish whether there are potential additional hazards to firefighters and the general public from fires involving structures roofed with PTFE-based materials concluded that in the event of a fire the probability of any additional threat would be minimal. Guidance for fire brigades on the use of such materials in buildings will be issued shortly by my Department and we understand that guidance for building control officers will be published in the autumn by the building research establishment.

Progress of the research project and on the preparation of guidance notes has been reported at meetings of the joint fire prevention committee on 2 October 1990, when the interim conclusions of the research were available, 15 October 1991, 7 April 1992 and 6 October 1992. The final results were made available to the committee on 23 March 1993.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Network Marketing

Mr. McMaster: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what studies he has undertaken into the concept of network marketing; what evidence there is to link this concept with associated marketing techniques, such as pyramid selling; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: A network marketing scheme is subject to the same legal requirements as pyramid selling if it includes the elements specified in section 118 of the Fair Trading Act. We are reviewing the legislation governing pyramid selling and similar trading schemes.

Transonic Wind Tunnel

Mr. Caborn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will list the countries that have contracted to use the European transonic wind tunnel cycle programme; for what amount of time; and at what charge;

(2) when the European transonic wind tunnel cycle programme will be ready for use; and what access countries outside the partnership have to the tunnel;

(3) who are the European partners in the European transonic wind tunnel cycle programme; and what is each country's contribution in cash terms.

Mr. Sainsbury: The partners in the European transonic wind tunnel (ETW) are United Kingdom, France Germany and the Netherlands.

They are providing funds in the following proportions:

	Construction/ Commissioning/ Calibration *Per cent.*	*Initial Operation* *Per cent.*
United Kingdom	28·0	31·0
France	28·0	31·0
Germany	38·0	31·0
Netherlands	6·0	7·0

Forecast final costs of the projects are as follows:

	DM million
Construction, commissioning and calibration	665·1
Initial operation	149·7

The partners' contributions are therefore as follows:

	Construction/ Commissioning/ Calibration *DM million*	*Initial Operation* *DM million*
United Kingdom	186·23	46·41
France	186·23	46·41
Germany	252·74	46·41
Netherlands	39·90	10·47

ETW management has decided that the tunnel will be operated on a fully commercial basis, with charges set accordingly, and will be accessible to customers worldwide.

Initial operation is scheduled to commence on 1 July 1994, with full commercial operation planned from 1 July 1997.

The project has not yet reached the stage when contracts for use have been negotiated. Manufacturers in each partner country have, however, indicated their intention to use the tunnel in the early stages of initial operation.

Trademarks

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to amend the law on trademarks.

Mr. McLoughlin: A Bill to implement the proposals in the White Paper "Reform of Trade Marks Law" (Cm 1203) has been fully drafted, and will be introduced as soon as the parliamentary timetable permits.

Warren Spring Laboratory

Ms Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the research contracts awarded to Warren Spring Laboratory in each of the last two years relating to all aspects of transport policy.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is as follows:

Contracts Relating to Transport Policy

Customer Department and Contract Title	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT (Marine Pollution Control Unit)		
Soft Sediments	✓	✓
Expert Systems	✓	—
Cleaning of Rocky Shorelines	✓	—
Demulsifiers	✓	✓
Sea Trials Model Validation	✓	—
Underwater Releases Phase II	✓	—
Persistent Chemicals	✓	✓
Oil Thickness Determination	✓	✓
Remote Sensing Validation	✓	✓
Remote Sensing Contract Monitoring	✓	—
Review of Refined Products	—	✓
Vapour Cloud Modelling	—	✓
Springsweep Maintenance	—	✓

Customer Department and Contract Title	1991-92	1992-93
Process of Dispersion	—	√
Fate of Chemicals Spilled at Sea	—	√
Extension to Eurospill Model	—	√
Oily Bilge Water Filter Performance	—	√
In-situ Burning of Oil	—	√
Review of Sorbents	—	√
Modelling of Sinking Chemicals	—	√
Various Minor Issues	√	√
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT (Marine Directorate)		
IMO Consultancy	√	—
Iron Ore Concentrate Cargoes	√	—
Study of Health Hazards from Residues	√	—
Japanese Penetration Method Tests	√	—
Iron Ore Concentrates Phase III	√	√
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT		
Aircraft Air Pollution Advice	√	√
Feasibility Study to Develop Computer Model on Fuel Consumption	—	√
Study on Runway Capacity in the South East	—	√
Additional Runway Capacity in the South East	√	—
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT (Transport Research Laboratory)		
Catalyst Testing of Cars	—	√
Emission Abatement Measures in a Car Driven under Cold Conditions	—	√
Exhaust Emission Tests on Fifty Light Duty Vehicles	√	—
DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY		
Aircraft Emission Studies	√	—
DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT		
Emissions from Vehicles and Fuels	—	√
Vehicle Emissions	√	√

Polly Peck

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he has required the administrator of Polly Peck to furnish him with a report under section 6 of the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986.

Mr. Heseltine: The joint administrator reported to the Secretary of State on 16 June 1992.

Mr. Asil Nadir

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will now make a direction to proceed under section 6 of the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986 against Mr. Asil Nadir.

Mr. Heseltine: On 25 November 1991 a bankruptcy order was made against Mr. Asil Nadir and he is disqualified from acting as a company director until discharged—normally three years. The Official Receiver is considering applying to the court to suspend the discharge period until Mr. Nadir has fully co-operated.

If the suspension is granted then an application under section 6 of the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986 will not be necessary.

British Standards Institution

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what level of grant-in-aid the Government will pay to the British Standards Institution this year; and if he will make a statement about BSI's role in relation to industrial competitiveness.

Mr. Heseltine: The British Standards Institution (BSI) is an independent body incorporated under royal charter. BSI has made an important contribution towards industrial competitiveness over the past 90 years in providing a framework for the setting of standards for industry. I am pleased to announce that the Government will make a grant-in-aid of £4·5 million for 1993-94 and that my Department will contribute a further £2·7 million in support to industry for standards making purposes.

In view of the changing nature of BSI standards, as a result of the increasing emphasis over recent years on the writing of standards at European and international level, and of the growth in BSI's quality assurance and testing activities, I have decided to review the need for Government financial assistance and the appropriate mechanisms for any future financial assistance, bearing in mind the need to ensure best value for money from public expenditure. This review is due to be completed by the end of September.

My officials are consulting all interested parties about future funding arrangements and about ways in which BSI and standards can contribute further to improving the competitiveness of British industry. They are seeking views on such questions as the value of national and international standards in support of competitiveness; the effectiveness of BSI as a standards-making organisation in a world market; the need for new types of product standard, or for new product testing, certification and marking schemes in the United Kingdom; and possible alternative approaches to standards writing at national level and to United Kingdom representation at international level. I have placed in the Library of the House a copy of the consultation note which has been issued.

Offshore Licensing

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was his Department's expenditure in 1992-93 on monitoring compliance with offshore licensing conditions; what is its projected expenditure in 1993-94; and what other bodies have a role in monitoring compliance with conditions.

Mr. Eggar: The monitoring of compliance with the conditions contained in offshore oil and gas licences is an integral part of the licence administration and technical support activities carried out by my Department, and monitoring is not separately costed. Other governmental bodies involved in monitoring particular aspects of the licence conditions include the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Scottish Office, the Health and Safety Executive, the Ministry of Defence, and the Department of Transport.

Warren Spring Laboratory

Mr. Robathan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he has taken to maintain the knowledge and expertise in wastes management and recycling developed by Warren Spring Laboratory after the sale of its site in Stevenage.

Mr. Heseltine *[pursuant to his reply, 27 May 1993, c. 692]:* I am announcing today the formation of a new national environmental technology centre (NETC). This is to be created by bringing together at Culham and Harwell the country's two main centres of environmental research, those of my Department's Warren Spring Laboratory (WSL) and AEA Technology. Together they will form a single centre of excellence in environmental technology.

WSL and AEA Technology has each established national and international reputations in environmental science and consultancy, serving customers in Government, in the private sector, and overseas. They are already working together in certain environmental areas. The NETC will provide a more comprehensive service for all these customers, and better value for the taxpayer's money. It will combine the complementary strengths of WSL and AEA Technology in the environmental field. It will aim to provide the full range of services provided in the past, and will develop and extend them. The Government will remain an important customer, and will deal with the NETC on a fee-paying basis.

This decision follows advice from PA consulting group on options for the future of WSL. The proposed relocation of WSL from its existing site at Stevenage to a greenfield site at Welwyn Garden City will not now proceed.

WSL has now been an executive agency of the Department of Trade and Industry for four years. I have been impressed by its progress within this framework towards becoming a more customer-oriented and cost conscious body, and I am confident that this progress will continue following the merger with AEA Technology.

The NETC will negotiate with all WSL's customers with the aim of taking on to the fullest extent possible the whole of WSL's business. WSL staff required to work on the business to be transferred will be expected to transfer to the AEA with their work. I am eager to see the greatest possible number of such staff transfer. The Department will seek to redeploy other staff, though some redundancies are likely.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Energy announced on 1 April that consultants were being appointed to advise on the practicability of privatising the AEA. I will want to consider the prospects of privatising the NETC activities in the light of that study.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade to what investigations his Department has been subject by the Data Protection Registrar in relation to a suspected breach of a data protection principle; if he will summarise the nature of each complaint and state when the complaint was made; and what remedial action was taken by his Department to ensure future compliance with the principle subject to the investigation.

Mr. Eggar *[pursuant to his reply, 20 May 1993, c. 288-89]:* My further inquiries have revealed that the complaint concerned a subject access request which was not promptly responded to. By the time the Data Protection Registrar brought this to the attention of the office which received the subject access request a response had already been provided. No further action was necessary.

EC Grants

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of EC grants available for 1992 remain unclaimed by the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I have been asked to reply.

As EC grants made under the structural funds are allocated on a multiannual basis, no annual figures for grants actually claimed are available. However, of the structural funds allocated to the United Kingdom for the period 1989-93, approximately 80 per cent. have been committed to projects. The remaining 20 per cent. is expected to be committed before the end of the year. Since there is no allocation specific to the United Kingdom in respect of other EC expenditure it is not possible to say what percentage of grants intended for the United Kingdom has been claimed.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Ballet Companies

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the current level of support from Arts Council funds to *(a)* the London City Ballet and *(b)* the National Ballet.

Mr. Brooke: This year's Arts Council grant to London City Ballet is £250,000. The grant to English National Ballet is £3,603,000.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Set-aside

12. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total acreage of arable land put into set-aside during the last three years.

Mrs. Shephard: A total of 54,317 hectares (134,000 acres) of land have been entered into the five-year scheme and 14,118 hectares (35,000 acres) into the one year scheme in the United Kingdom during the years 1990-92.

I will publish details of the amount of land set-aside under the arable area payments scheme as soon as possible.

Wildlife Habitats

13. **Ms Quin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what new measures her Department is considering to encourage or require farmers to promote wildlife habitats.

Mr. Jack: We are considering the results of consultations which we have just held on a range of new measures to benefit wildlife habitats, including new environmentally sensitive areas, a scheme to improve the condition of moorland and a habitat improvement scheme.

Mr. Milligan: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make provision under the new set-aside scheme for the preservation of good wildlife habitats created under the existing scheme.

Mr. Jack: We expect that farmers with land in the five-year set-aside scheme or in rotational set-aside will be able to enter land directly into non-rotational set-aside under the new arable area payments scheme. In addition, as part of our agri-environment programme, we are proposing a new scheme for the withdrawal of land from production for 20 years. Habitats of particular value created under the five-year scheme would be eligible for this new long-term scheme.

Potato Marketing Board

14. **Mr. Brandreth:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received from farmers in Cheshire on the future of the Potato Marketing Board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: We have received 19 representations by or on behalf of farmers in Cheshire, all expressing support for the continuation of the Potato Marketing Board.

Poultry Industry

15. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she next expects to meet representatives of the poultry industry to discuss the state of the sector.

Mr. Jack: I hope to be in regular contact with representatives of the industry. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary recently addressed the annual conference of the British Poultry Meat Federation.

Agricultural Trade

16. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the balance of trade in agricultural produce between the United Kingdom and France and the United Kingdom and Germany; and what are the main British products involved.

Mrs. Shephard: In 1992 we had a trade deficit of £624 million with France and £403 million with Germany.

Wine was the largest single import in each case.

The largest British exports to both countries were meat and whisky.

Agricultural Tenancy Law

17. **Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals she intends to bring forward for the reform of agricultural tenancy law.

Mrs. Shephard: The objective of agricultural tenancy reform would be to encourage more letting of land by giving landlords and tenants greater freedom to negotiate the terms of their own agreements. The industry has been consulted on proposals and its views are now being considered. The introduction of the necessary legislation will depend on parliamentary time becoming available.

Farm Incomes

18. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the average level of farm income in 1992; and what is the projected figure for 1993.

Mr. Jack: Aggregate farm income for the industry as a whole rose by just over 10 per cent. in 1992. It is too early to forecast figures for 1993.

Bananas

19. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how she is monitoring the price of bananas.

Mrs. Shephard: Data on the price of bananas at all stages in the marketing chain from the point of import into the United Kingdom to final retail sale are collected on a regular basis and allow comparison with prices in other countries.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received about the proposed EC banana regime.

Mrs. Shephard: We have received a wide range of representations from interested parties at all stages in the marketing of bananas.

These have included representatives of producer interests and companies involved at all stages in the marketing of bananas in the United Kingdom.

24. **Sir Donald Thompson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions are taking place on the criteria to be used for measuring quality within the new EC banana regime; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Shephard: Council regulation 404/93 on the common organisation of the European banana market provides for the development of quality and marketing standards for bananas marketed in the Community.

Details of these standards and how they will be applied will be decided by the Commission in consultation with member states.

No discussion of quality standards has yet taken place.

Deregulation

20. **Mr. Clappison:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on progress on deregulation.

Mrs. Shephard: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough and Whitby (Mr. Sykes).

Scotch Whisky

21. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will arrange to meet representatives of the Scotch whisky industry to discuss the prospects for the industry and the workers employed in it.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. Friend hopes to have frequent contacts with representatives of the Scotch whisky industry.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

22. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of the United Kingdom is now designated as environmentally sensitive areas.

Mrs. Shephard: Just over 9 per cent. of agricultural land in the United Kingdom is now designated under the environmentally sensitive areas scheme.

The Government have announced proposals for further designations which together are expected to bring the total area covered to approximately 15 per cent. by the end of the year.

Food Labelling

23. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps she will take to improve the accuracy of food labelling.

Mr. Soames: It is already an offence under the Food Safety Act 1990 falsely to describe a food or to give information which is likely to mislead as to its nature, substance or quality.

Food Advisory Committee

25. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she next intends to meet the chairman of the Food Advisory Committee to discuss the committee's membership.

Mr. Soames: I have no plans at present for such a discussion.

The views of the chairman of the Food Advisory Committee are always taken into account when appointments to the committee are being considered.

Less Favoured Areas

26. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she will next visit Dartmoor hill farmers to discuss the less favoured areas.

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary (Lords), Earl Howe, chaired a meeting of the Hill Farming Advisory Committee on 2 June. Two of the members of the committee farm on Dartmoor and a range of issues related to farming in the less favoured areas was discussed.

Equine Viral Arteritis

Mr. Spring: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the outbreak of equine viral arteritis.

Mr. Soames: On 7 June the Animal Health Trust confirmed an outbreak of equine viral arteritis (EVA) on a non-thoroughbred stud in Nottinghamshire. The trust is investigating a number of associated suspect outbreaks at various locations in Great Britain. This is the first reported incidence of EVA in the United Kingdom. The source of the infection is still under investigation and, although some reports have indicated a possible link with a stallion imported from Poland in September last year, this link has not yet been positively confirmed.

EVA is not a notifiable disease in Great Britain and statutory disease control measures and movement restrictions do not apply. Similarly, the disease is not specifically covered by EC animal health rules governing movements of equidae between member states. However, EC rules in relation to the import of equidae into the Community from third countries, to be implemented in Great Britain with effect from 1 July 1993, require that uncastrated males must either originate from countries which have been free of EVA for at least six months or the stallion blood or its semen must have been tested with negative results for EVA prior to import.

The United Kingdom equine industry operates a voluntary code of practice for the prevention and control of EVA which is issued by the Horserace Betting Levy Board. In addition, importers are free to seek from the exporter or vendor the provision of private veterinary certification in respect of EVA.

Officials attended a meeting organised by the industry last week. At that meeting it was confirmed that an application for an inactivated vaccine had been received by the veterinary medicines directorate and that it was being assessed as quickly as possible. In addition, the state veterinary service will increase the level of post import testing of stallions imported from third countries. All those giving seropositive results will be re-exported to their country of origin.

We will continue to monitor the situation extremely carefully.

Integrated Administration and Control System

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received from the European Agriculture Commissioner concerning her proposed visits by Commission staff to member states to discuss the extent and nature of implementation difficulties concerning the integrated administration and control system procedure.

Mr. Jack: The Agriculture Commissioner has indicated that Commission staff will be visiting all 12 member states during June and July to monitor implementation of the integrated administration and control system in each member state. The Commission team will be visiting the United Kingdom in the week beginning 5 July.

Mr. Luff: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps were taken by her Department to prepare the farming community for the introduction of IACS forms.

Mrs. Shephard: We kept farming organisations informed of the progress of the EC regulations governing the integrated administration and control system. We subsequently consulted them during the preparation of the explanatory booklet designed to help farmers complete their IACS application forms.

THORP

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to the answer by the President of the Board of Trade of 25 May, *Official Report*, column *488*, if she will make a statement on the current timing of the decision in respect of the revised discharge authorisations in connection with the commissioning of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. Friend and the Secretary of State for the Environment have recently received a report

from the inspectors in response to consultation on draft radioactive discharge authorisations for BNFL Sellafield. Their report is currently under consideration and a decision on how we intend to proceed will be made as quickly as possible.

Producer Organisations (Discipline Rules)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps require to be taken to implement the European Community regulation No. 3759/92 in the United Kingdom with particular reference to the extension of discipline rules with respect to producer organisations in the fisheries sector, including aquaculture.

Mr. Jack: Regulation 3759/92 does not require member states to extend the discipline rules of fish producer organisations to those who do not belong to such an organisation. It allows member states the option of doing so. There are no present plans for doing so in the United Kingdom.

Brazilian Beef

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what restrictions are placed on the importation of beef from Brazil to deal with environmental concerns at point of production.

Mr. Jack: Only beef produced in certain premises in Brazil, which are approved by the Commission, can be imported into the Community. All consignments of beef are subject to a documentary check on entry to the Community to ensure that the meat was produced at an approved plant. A percentage of consignments are also subject to physical checks carried out under the supervision of an official veterinary surgeon.

Sheep

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current population of sheep; and what was the figure 10 years ago.

Mr. Jack: The total number of sheep and lambs on agricultural holdings in England estimated from the June 1992 agricultural census was 20,529,478. The corrresponding figure for June 1982 was 15,456,436. These figures include estimates for minor holdings.

Fishing (Days at Sea)

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the average number of half days at sea provisionally allocated to fishing vessels *(a)* in each fishery and *(b)* in the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mrs. Shephard: The average of provisional allocations to fishing vessels licensed by MAFF, SOAFD and DANI is 275 half-days. Individual vessels may prosecute a variety of fisheries and therefore figures for the average provisional allocation per fishery cannot be given.

Codex Alimentarius

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the implications for food standards and for food standards regulations in the EC and in the United Kingdom of GATT proposals concerning the UN FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius.

Mrs. Shephard: Under the terms of the proposed GATT Uruguay round agreement on sanitary and phytosanitary measures, any trade restriction imposed in conformity with internationally agreed standards such as the UN FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius shall automatically be considered to be consistent with GATT rules. This shall not prevent the imposition of tighter standards where they are scientifically justified.

Moorland Destocking

Mr. Milligan: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received on which areas to target for support under the moorland destocking scheme.

Mr. Jack: I have received a number of representations supporting the Government's proposal that the scheme should be targeted on specific moorland in the less favoured areas where a reduction in sheep stocking would be most likely to achieve environmental benefit. Some respondents suggested particular areas or moorland types for inclusion.

Veterinary Surgeons

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many veterinary surgeons are currently employed in his Department on questions of animal welfare, and at what cost; what was the figure 10 years ago; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: All veterinary staff of the animal health and welfare group are involved with animal welfare as part of their normal duties.

In 1992-93 this work amounted to 10·3 per cent. of veterinary time, which is the equivalent of 43 man-years at a cost of £2,274,872 per annum.

Ten years ago animal welfare work amounted to 10·5 per cent. of veterinary time, the equivalent to 57·6 man-years. Estimated cost then was £1,523,635 per annum.

TRANSPORT

Maritime Safety

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which countries voted for and against the United Kingdom proposals for ferry survivability in the Maritime Safety Committee of the International Maritime Organisation on 24 to 28 May.

Mr. Norris: The United Kingdom proposal was not put to the vote, however the vote for a consolidated proposal put forward by Canada, Denmark, Belgium, Norway and Sweden and supported by the United Kingdom was 16 for and 10 against. A detailed record of the voting was not taken. Sixty-five countries attended the meeting.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what decisions taken at the 62nd session of the International Maritime Organisation's Maritime Safety Committee meeting 24 to 28 May will have a bearing on

improving the safety of shipping in the English channel and in the shipping lanes for ferries between British ports and those in Belgium and the Netherlands.

Mr. Norris: Routeing and other navigational issues, including ferry routes, for the English channel were not discussed at the 62nd session of the Maritime Safety Committee.

British Trent (Collision)

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how and when he was informed of the collision between BP tanker British Trent and the bulk carrier Western Winner.

Mr. Norris: The Department of Transport's marine emergency operations room was notified by Dover coastguard of the incident by telex message at 07.36 on Thursday 3 June. The operations room informed Lord Caithness, the Minister for Shipping, who informed the Secretary of State at approximately 09.30.

North Sea Supply Vessels

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many Norwegian ships are operating or have operated under contract or charter in the United Kingdom sector of the North sea supplying oil rigs *(a)* at present, *(b)* one year ago, *(c)* 18 months ago and *(d)* two years ago;

(2) how many British ships are operating or have operated under contract or charter in the Norwegian sector of the North sea supplying oil rigs *(a)* at present, *(b)* one year ago, *(c)* 18 months ago and *(d)* two years ago.

Mr. Norris: The Government do not collect details of contracts placed in the North sea, but I have seen the following figures:

	Norwegian ships in United Kingdom sector	*British ships in Norwegian sector*
(a)	27	1
(b)	24	0
(c)	22	0
(d)	33	0

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, has recently written to the Norwegian Minister for Trade and Shipping about this apparent imbalance.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how the channel tunnel terminal will be described on road signs on the principal motorways and trunk roads in the direction of Folkestone; what effect including the tunnel terminal on road signs will have on the current level of references to Folkestone on such road signs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The new fixed channel link will be described as "Channel Tunnel" on trunk road signs. This is a change from the earlier proposal to sign it as "Eurotunnel".

The inclusion of "Channel Tunnel" on the signs does not itself affect the number of signs on which "Folkestone" will be shown, but the reclassification of the town in the mid 1980s from a super primary to a primary destination does.

As signs are now being changed for other purposes, the references to Folkestone will be made consistent with its primary destination status. The major change will be on the M20 motorway. The town will continue to appear on all signs eastward from the western side of Ashford. Westwards from there it will no longer appear on advance direction signs but, in the light of recent representation made to my Department we have agreed to retain it on all distance signs on M20 and M26 back to M25. These are the signs which are located between junction and show destinations and the countdown mileages to them.

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the Government's plans for rail freight travel and handling to take advantage of the opening of the channel tunnel.

Mr. Freeman: We have supported investment by British Rail of over £400 million in preparation for channel tunnel freight services, and have asked BR to explore further the opportunities for maximising private sector involvement in their development. It remains the Government's objective to secure the transfer of this business to the private sector as soon as possible.

Emergency Action Codes

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 17 March, *Official Report*, column *265*, what progress was made at the United Nations working group meeting held in mid-April to consider proposals for incorporating the Hazchem warning system into proposed European legislation; what further action he proposes to take; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: An informal UN working group meeting was held on 19-22 April at the United Kingdom Fire Service college to examine possible ways of devising and displaying on road tank vehicles and rail tank wagons carrying dangerous goods throughout Europe a form of action code to be used by the emergency services in the event of an accident. The meeting was a result of United Kingdom initiatives in recent regular sessions of the WP.15 group of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, at which the need for emergency action in the first few minutes of an incident and for coded information to be the same in all languages had been acknowledged.

The meeting was arranged by the Home Office and chaired by my Department. It was attended by a wide representation from signatory countries to the UNECE's ADR agreement concerning the international carriage of dangerous goods by road and from relevant international associations. A number of presentations illustrating from experience the benefits of the United Kingdom's Hazchem action code were made by United Kingdom interests. I am grateful to the commandant of the college and his staff for the efficient arrangements, including the vital practical demonstrations on the fireground. Although some participants remained satisfied with the present Kemler code in the ADR or that the UN substance identification number would be sufficient in future or that use of reference books was not a problem, a majority declared an interest in developing an emergency action code to be included additionally in the ADR. My Department and the Health and Safety Executive therefore will continue to promote formally our detailed proposals for amending the ADR agreement to include a composite placard.

A representative of the European Commission recalled the succession of approaches to the Commission and questions in the European Parliament on this subject. He conceded that with this level of political concern in a member state, a derogation would have to be proposed for inclusion in the draft Council directive currently under informal discussion between the Commission services, member states and other parties that would, in effect, apply the provisions of the ADR to domestic transport. Following further discussion with the Commission, a provision has now been included in a new draft which would allow the continued use of existing emergency action codes for domestic journeys until an internationally agreed code is developed.

I have placed a copy of the official report of the UN working group in the Library.

A249

Sir Roger Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about progress on the preparatory work for the dualling of the A249 from the M2 to the Kingsferry bridge; when he expects tenders to be invited; and what are the latest estimated dates for commencement and completion of this project.

Mr. Key: Tenders for the construction of the A249 (M2 to Iwade) improvement are expected to be invited later this summer with a view to starting work around the end of the year. The work is expected to take about two years to complete.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister is he will list his official engagements for Thursday 10 June.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 10 June.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Political Advisers

Mr. Hain: To ask the Prime Minister what was the number of Government political advisers for each year since 1980-81.

The Prime Minister: The information requested has not been regularly collected centrally. The available information on the number of special advisers—including expert advisers—is as follows:

	Number
July 1988	30
October 1989	31
October 1990	33
November 1991	39
November 1992	38
May 1993	42

Mr. Hain: To ask the Prime Minister what was the total expenditure on Government political advisers broken down into salaries and other costs for each year since 1980-81 in *(a)* cash and *(b)* 1992-93 prices.

The Prime Minister: Precise total salary bills and aggregate figures for 1980-81—1987-88 are not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The aggregate figures for 1988-1993 available are as follows:

As at	*Paybill*[1] *£ million*	*1992-93 prices*[2] *£ million*
June 1993	1·37	1·34
September 1992	1·30	1·30
September 1991	1·10	1·14
July 1990	0·95	1·05
June 1989	0·93	1·11
September 1988	0·74	0·94

[1] Not including ERNIC and other personnel overheads.
[2] Calculated using the GDP deflator.

School Visits

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 27 May, *Official Report*, column *663*, if he will give the date and name of each school which he has visited since taking his present office.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing further to add to my reply to the hon. Member on 27 May at column *663*.

Ministers (Severance Pay)

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister how much in severance payments the right hon. Members for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont) and for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) will receive following their departure from ministerial office; and to what extent such payments are free from income tax.

The Prime Minister: Severance payments for Ministers are determined under the provisions of the Ministerial and other Pensions and Salaries Act 1991. Under the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988, severance payments of less than £30,000—including those to former Ministers—are exempt from tax.

Government Departments (Sub-contractors)

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to require contracting suppliers of goods and services to Government Departments to exercise good practices in the prompt payment of their sub-contractors; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Following the announcement during the 1992 Budget, all Government contracts have been required to contain a clause requiring the supplier or contractor to pay its subcontractors promptly. In the absence of normal practice to the contrary for that type of contract or other special circumstances, the commitment should be to pay the subcontractor within 30 days of receipt of a valid invoice or similar demand for payment as defined by the contract.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Good Government

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement defining Her Majesty's Government's concept of good government as a principle governing the United Kingdom's relations with other states; and if he will state what Her Majesty's Government's policy is towards those states which do not meet the good government criteria.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Good government includes the legitimacy, accountability and competence of the processes and institutions of government, along with respect for human rights and the rule of law. It is an important consideration in our relations with other countries. In consultation with our EC partners and others, we seek to encourage Governments not meeting good government criteria to take appropriate action.

Good government issues significantly influence the effectiveness of aid and are therefore an important criterion, alongside other factors, for the allocation of aid between and within countries. We use our aid programme in positive ways to improve the quality of government. Where standards are not met, for example where human rights are persistently abused, we are prepared to withdraw or reduce our assistance.

Bosnia

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will arrange talks with British-based voluntary groups involved in supplying aid to Bosnia to discuss action the Croatian Government could take to facilitate British aid reaching Bosnia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We maintain contact with a wide range of British voluntary agencies who are active in Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is responsible for co-ordinating the international community's response to this crisis, which includes regular dialogue with voluntary agencies and the various authorities in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Croatian Government about interference from Croatia with United Kingdom aid to Bosnia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have urged and continue to urge all interested parties to respect the right of international humanitarian agencies to free and unimpeded access to all parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina. We seek at all times to co-operate fully with them and to ensure the safety of their personnel as embodied in UN Security Council resolution 820 of 17 April.

Mozambique

Mr. Spring: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further assistance the United Kingdom will be providing to Mozambique.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: At the Maputo Donors conference this week we pledged £7 million of humanitarian assistance of which some £4 million will be for food aid. With the £3 million we pledged following the signature of the peace accords this will bring the United Kingdom's contribution to £10 million. The non-food aid assistance will be channelled mainly through British non-governmental organisations in the form of seeds and tools provision and for demining work in Zambezia Province. Our delegation at the conference stressed the vital importance of effective donor co-ordination and the key role to be played in this by the UN's Department of Humanitarian Affairs.

EMPLOYMENT

Lady Victoria Pit

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if a decision has been reached on the most appropriate location of mining records currently deposited in Lady Victoria pit at Newtongrange by British Coal on behalf of HM inspectorate of mines and quarries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I am not aware of any such decision. It is a matter for the Health and Safety Executive and the British Coal Corporation.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what discussions he has had with *(a)* HM inspectorate of mines and quarries and *(b)* British Coal on the most appropriate location of mining records currently deposited in Lady Victoria pit at Newtongrange by British Coal on behalf of HM inspectorate of mines and quarries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We have had no such discussions on this matter.

Public Sector (Strikes)

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans Her Majesty's Government have to introduce measures which would render it more difficult for public sector workers to take *(a)* strike action and *(b)* any other form of industrial action.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government have no immediate plans for legislation beyond the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill currently before Parliament. We continue to keep all aspects of industrial relations law under review.

HEALTH

Road Accidents

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what basis the fee for emergency treatment under section 155 of the Road Traffic Act 1972 has been calculated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The emergency treatment fee, collected under section 158 of the Road Traffic Act 1988, is payable for immediate medical attention following a road traffic accident. The fee represents a contribution towards the actual costs incurred. Orginally set at 12s 6d in 1934, it was not raised until 1969, since when it has been periodically uprated in line with inflation.

BMA

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she last met British Medical Association officials; and what matters were discussed.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State last met representatives of the British Medical Association (BMA) on 18 May. The meeting was held at the request of the chairman of the General Medical Services Committee (GMSC) of the BMA to discuss a range of issues of current concern to the profession, including the patients charter, violence against general practitioners and complaints arrangements.

I met the GMSC chairman on 24 May to discuss complaints arrangements.

Contraceptives

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average cost to the NHS of prescribing the contraceptive pill to one woman for a year:

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available. The costs of different brands of oral contraceptives are listed in the "British National Formulary", a copy of which is available in the Library.

General Practitioners

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her recommended maximum GP list size in the London implementation zone; what is the average GP list size; how many GPs there are in the zone; and how many have list sizes of *(a)* over 2,000, *(b)* over 2,500, *(c)* over 3,000, *(d)* over 3,500 and *(e)* over 4,000.

Dr. Mawhinney: The maximum number of persons which a general practitioner may have on his list in all localities is specified in the National Health Service (General Medical Services) Regulations 1992. Regulation 24(2) provides that the maximum number shall be (a) 3,500 for a single-handed doctor (b) 4,500 for a doctor practising in a partnership, subject to a maximum average of 3,500 for each of the partners in the practice; and, where the doctor employs an assistant, a further maximum number of 2,000 for each assistant. There are no recommended maxima specifically for the London initiative zone.

The London initiative zone comprises five complete family health services authorities (FHSAs) and seven part-FHSAs. The information requested is not available for part-FHSAs.

As at 1 October 1992, there were 3,186 unrestricted GPs in the 12 complete FHSAs which lie wholly or partly within the London initiative zone. The average list size was 2,092. The number of GPs by average list size is shown in the table:

	Over 2,000	*Over 2,500*	*Over 3,000*	*Over 3,500*
General practitioners	1,713	643	239	94

No data are available on GPs with a list size over 4,000.

West Midlands RHA

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the vacant post of chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority was advertised publicly; and in what journals.

Dr. Mawhinney: No.

Prostate Cancer

Ms Lynne: To asks the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of deaths per year from prostate cancer for males *(a)* between the ages of 55 and 65 years and *(b)* of 65 years and over.

Mr. Sackville: The number of deaths from a malignant neoplasm of the prostate (International Classification of Diseases, ninth revision, code 185) for 1991, and for earlier years, can be found in the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys publication "Mortality statistics: cause' Series DH2", copies of which are available in the Library. The number of deaths in 1992 for males aged: *(a)* 55 to 64 (inclusive) is 600; and *(b)* 65 years and over is 8,069. These figures are for England and Wales.

Trent RHA

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the chairman of the Trent regional health authority is expected to retire or reach the end of his term of office; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Sir Michael Carlisle's current term of office ends on 31 July 1994.

Food Hygiene

Mr. Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the recent Food Safety Week initiative; and what action her Department is taking to promote food hygiene.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 8 June at cols. *242-43*.

Occupational Therapy

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been *(a)* the average and *(b)* the maximum waiting time for occupational therapy for patients within each district health authority in each of the last 10 years; and how many people were on each waiting list.

Mr. Sackville: Many patients waiting for occupational therapy are admitted under another specialty and are not recorded on separate occupational therapy waiting lists. For this reason information on the number of patients waiting for occupational therapy is not available centrally.

WALES

NHS Administration

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total number of administrative staff and the administrative cost of the NHS in Wales in each year since 1987.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is listed as follows:

Administrative and clerical staff in post as at 30 September[1]

	Whole-time equivalents
1987	7,087
1988	7,279
1989	7,565
1990	8,069
1991	8,733

[1]Including Managerial staff and staff employed by the Welsh Health Common Services Authority.

Aggregated administrative cost in financial year[2]

	Thousands
1987-88	57,811
1988-89	63,725
1989-90	73,767
1990-91	86,321
1991-92	106,439

[2]*Source:* Summarised accounts of Health Authorities, Welsh Health Common Services Authority, Family Health Service Authorities (formerly Family Practitioner Committees) (includes the Dental Practice Board costs (and represents the 5 per cent. contribution paid by the Welsh Office to Department of Health in support of Dental Practice Board's running costs apportioned for salaries only)) and the Health Promotion Authority for Wales.

Radon Gas

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many homes in Wales are estimated to have radon gas contamination above 200 becquerels per cubic metre of air.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The National Radiological Protection Board survey estimates that up to 3,000 homes in Wales may have radon levels above the Government action level of 200 becquerels per cubic metre of air.

As measurements are completed, householders whose homes are found to have concentrations above the action level, (which is half that recommended by the European Commission), are advised of the actions which they should consider.

The results of further research, to more accurately delineate areas where concentrations may be higher than average, are expected in the spring of 1994. Meanwhile, free tests of radon levels are available to concerned householders living in areas where concentrations may be elevated.

Diabetics

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the incidence of renal failure among diabetics, expressed as *(a)* the total number and *(b)* the percentage of all diabetics in each area health authority in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is not collected centrally.

Secretary of State (Visits)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many times he has visited the Principality since 1979.

Mr. Redwood: I have visited Wales on many occasions in the past as part of previous ministerial duties; on business and in a personal capacity.

Hospitals (Complaints)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many complaints were *(a)* submitted, *(b)* investigated and *(c)* substantiated for each hospital unit in Wales and for each year since the health commissioner was established.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is not available in the form requested. However, the number of complaints received by the Health Service Commissioner for Wales, and subsequently investigated, since the office was established, are as follows:

	Complaints received	*Investigated*
[1]1973-74	21	2
1974-75	51	16
1975-76	43	6
1976-77	43	10
1977-78	41	5
1978-79	52	8
1979-80	31	5
1980-81	42	5
1981-82	38	6
1982-83	33	6
1983-84	49	3

	Complaints received	Investigated
1984-85	37	9
1985-86	34	6
1986-87	44	5
1987-88	39	7
1988-89	37	4
1989-90	33	3
1990-91	51	3
1991-92	79	4
1992-93	67	8

[1] From 1 October 1973.

Complaints are often made up of more than one grievance. Information on those aspects of the complaint that are either upheld or not upheld is not collected separately for Wales.

The information is available in the annual reports of the Health Service Commissioner, copies of which are held in the Library of the House.

Consultant Surgeons

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what action he intends to take to ensure that consultant surgeons in Wales are giving the NHS value for money during their contracted sessions;

(2) by what method he intends to monitor the hospital trusts in Wales to ensure that consultant surgeons are required to reach a threshold of operating time during their NHS contracted sessions.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It is a matter for individual health authorities and NHS trusts to satisfy themselves that consultant surgeons are fulfilling the terms of their NHS contracts.

Lead Water Pipes

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information his Department holds on the number of households in each local authority area that have lead pipes through which drinking water flows.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The most recent available information is from the 1981 Welsh house condition survey. Estates, for each county, of the number of dwellings with a lead service pipe to the cold water tap in the kitchen are shown in the following table. District information is not available.

	Number
Clwyd	19,600
Dyfed	12,800
Gwent	13,300
Gwynedd	6,600
Mid Glamorgan	34,800
Powys	4,300
South Glamorgan	65,600
West Glamorgan	33,500

Information on lead water pipes is currently being collected in the Welsh house condition survey for 1993, the results of which will be available around the end of the year.

Fertility Treatment

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many people in Wales have undergone fertility treatment in each year since 1987; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how much money has been spent by the NHS in Wales on providing fertility treatment in each year from 1987; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what percentage of those women who received fertility treatment in Wales in each year from 1985 to 1991 carried to full term; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not held centrally.

Fostering

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many children in Wales are in foster care between the ages of *(a)* 0 and four years, *(b)* four and eight years, *(c)* eight and 12 years and *(d)* 12 and 16 years respectively.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The most recently available information on the numbers of children in local authority foster care in Wales relates to the numbers placed at 31 March 1991 under the Boarding Out Regulations 1988. The numbers of age group are shown in the following table:

Number of children in local authority foster care at 31 March 1991

Age group	Number
Aged Under 5	407
5-9	514
10-15	744
16 and over	285

These figures do not include children placed under private fostering arrangements.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list *(a)* the total population, *(b)* the total capital budget for 1993-94 and *(c)* the total revenue budget for 1993-94 for (i) Colwyn borough, (ii) Aberconwy, (iii) Arfon, (iv) Taff-Ely, (v) Dyfed and (vi) Gwynedd councils.

Mr. Redwood: The information requested is given in the following table.

Forecast capital expenditure and revenue budgets for 1993-94(a)

	Total population £000 (b)	Gross capital expenditure £000 (c)	Net revenue expenditure £000 (d)
Colwyn	56,500	11,757	7,899
Aberconwy	53,900	8,978	8,890
Arfon	56,100	16,476	10,169
Taff Ely	98,400	11,096	16,884
Dyfed	350,900	17,814	254,317
Gwynedd	240,100	14,706	166,859

(a) Provisional.
(b) 1991 mid-year estimate (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys).
(c) Local authority April 1993 forecast.
(d) Budget.

NHS Staff

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* district nurses, *(b)* community midwives, *(c)* health visitors, *(d)* community psychiatric nurses and *(e)* practice nurses are or were employed in the national health service in Wales in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* Detailed breakdowns of nursing staff employed by district health authorities and national health service trusts into occupational groups such as those requested are not considered reliable. However information on the whole-time equivalent numbers of all nursing and midwifery staff is listed in table 1.

Information on the whole-time equivalent numbers of practice nurses employed by general medical practitioners is listed in table 2.

Table 1
Nursing and midwifery staff employed by district health authorities and national health service trusts in post as at 30 September

Year	Number
1988	27,920
1989	28,037
1990	28,093
1991	27,962
[1]1992	27,583

Table 2
Practice nurses employed by general medical practitioners as at 1 October

Year	Number
1988	194
1989	268
1990	459
1991	524
1992	519

[1] In addition there are about 1,000 student nurses who have been reclassified as students from nurses following the introduction of Project 2000 nursing education reforms

SCOTLAND

Clyde Fishermen

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the number of applications for additional days at sea made by fishermen registered in the Clyde ports to date.

Sir Hector Monro: To date seven applications for additional days at sea have been received by fishermen with vessels registered in the Clyde ports. All such applications will be considered carefully and fishermen will be notified of the outcome of their applications in due course.

Forestry Conservation

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list *(a)* those areas of Forestry Commission land which are sites of special scientific interest and *(b)* those areas of Forestry Commission land which are eligible for sites of special scientific interest status but are not classed as sites of special scientific interest land.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 25 May 1993]:* The following list names those sites of special scientific interest which are wholly or partly on Forestry Commission land, grouped under each of the commission's forest districts. I am not aware of any areas of Forestry Commission land which are potentially sites of special scientific interest but which have still to be designated.

ENGLAND

Chilterns Forest District
- Dancers End
- Hodgemoor
- Homefield
- Maulden Heath
- Maulden Wood and Pennyfathers Hills
- Potton Wood
- Shabbington
- Waterperry

Cornwall and North Devon Forest District
- Deptford Farm Pastures
- Goonhilly
- Marsland to Clovelly Coast
- Whiteleigh Meadows

Dorset Forest District
- Avon Valley
- Blackdown
- Ebblake Bog
- Holt and West Moors Heaths
- Hurn Common
- Hyde Heath
- Lulworth Park and Lake
- Moors River
- Morden Bog
- Oakers Bog
- Poole Harbour
- Rempstone Heath
- Town Common
- Turners Puddle Heath
- Wareham Forest Sites

Forest of Dean Forest District
- Dingle Woods
- Dymock Woods
- Edgehills Quarry
- Haugh Wood
- Meezy Hurst
- Nagshead
- Oakenhill Railway Cutting
- Shorn Cliffe Caswell Wood
- Soudley Ponds
- Speech House Oaks
- Upper Wye Gorge

Kielder Forest District
- Birky Cleugh
- Butterburn Flow
- Cauldbeck Flow
- Christianbury Crags
- Coom Rigg Moss
- Falstone Moss
- Felecia Moss
- Gowany Knowe Moss
- Grain Heads Moss
- Haining Head Moss
- Hobbs Flow
- Hummel Knowe Moss
- Irthing Gorge
- Kershope Bridge
- Kielder Head and Emblehope Moors
- Kingwater
- Roman Walls Lough
- The Lakes

Lakes Forest District
- Bowness Knott
- Buttermere Fells
- Claife Tarns and Mires
- Eden Gorge

Ennerdale Water
Dodgson Wood
Hutton Roof Crags
Miterdale Head
Pillar and Ennerdale Fells
Scout and Cunswick Scars
Skiddaw Group
Whitbarrow

Marches Forest District
Elton Lane Cutting
Granhams Moor Quarry
Long Mynd
Mortimer Forest
Shrawley Woods
Stiperstones and Hollies
Wyre Forest

Midlands Forest District
Abbots Moss
Black Lake, Delamere
Burntwood
Cannock Chase
Dimmingsdale
Forest Banks
Pettypool Brook Valley

New Forest District
New Forest

Northants Forest District
Bedford Purlieus
Bucknall Wood Meadows
Castor Hanglands
Clipsham Old Quarry and Pickworth Great Wood
Eye Brook Valley Woods
Launde Big Wood
Owston Woods
Salcey Forest
Stoke and Bowd Lane Woods
Sudborough Green Lodge Meadows
Yardley Chase
Wakerley Spinney

North York Moors Forest District
Allerthorpe Common
Beck Hole
Botton Head
Castle Hill Wood
Cockrah Wood
Ellerburn Bank
Ellers Wood and Sand Dale
Frog Wood Bog
Gormire
Low Redford Meadows
May Moss
Newtondale
Ryedale Windy Pits
Scar End Wood
Seive Dale Fen
Snaper Farm Meadows
Troutsdale and Rosekirkdale Fens

Rothbury Forest District
Cheviot
Gibside
Harbottle Moors
Holborn Lake and Moss
Holystone Burn Woods
Holystone North Woods
Quarryhouse Moor Ponds
Simonside Hills
Strother Hill

Sherwood and Lincs Forest District
Bevercotes Park
Birklands and Bilhaugh
Dark Peak
Ginny Spring, Whitwell Wood
Goyt Valley
Great West and Cocklode Woods
Hardy Gang Wood
Hatton Wood
Mather Wood
Newball Wood
Redgate Woods and Mansey Common
Roe Wood
Scotgrove Wood
Sherwood Forest Golf Course
Shining Cliff Woods
Stainfield Woods
Wellow Park
Wharncliffe Crags
Wickenby Wood

Somerset and South Devon Forest District
Blackdown and Sampford Common
Britty Common
Bullers Hill Quarry
Culm Davy
Denham Wood
Doverhay
Haldon Forest
Laughter Quarry
Priors Park Adscombe
Quants
Ruttersleigh
Shaugh Prior Wood
Stoke Woods
Thurlbear Wood and Quarrylands
Tower Wood Quarry

South Downs Forest District
Botley Wood and Everetts and Mushes Copses
Bouldner and Hampstead Cliffs
Briddlesford Copses
Butser Hill
Fairmile Bottom
Gurnard Ledge to Saltmead Ledge
Kingley Vale
Kings Quay Shore
Mottistone Down
Newtown Harbour
Parkhurst Forest
West Harting Down

Suffolk Forest District
Chalkney Wood
Hales and Shadwell Woods
Lineage Wood and Railway Track, Long Melford
Sutton and Hollesley Heaths

Thetford Forest District
Beeches Pit, West Stow
Cranberry Rough, Hockham
Cranwich Camp
East Wretham Health
High Lodge, Mildenhall
Rex Graham, Reserve
Standford Training Area
Swanton Novers Woods
Thetford Golf Course and Marsh

Weald Forest District
Darwell Wood
Lullington Health
Orlestone
St. Leonards
Stone Hill Rocks
West Blean and Thornden Woods

West Downs Forest District
Bentley Station Meadow
Bramshill
Castle Bottom
Chiddingfold Forest
Pasture Wood
Puttenham and Crooksbury Common
Sulham and Tidmarsh
Warren Heath Ponds

Wilts and Avon Forest District
Avon Gorge
Ebsbury Down
Roundway Down and Covert
Savernake Forest

WALES
Ceredigion Forest District
Coed Cwm Clettwr
Coed Mynachlog Fawr
Elenidd
Figyn Blaen Brefi
Llynoedd Ieuan
Rhos Cilcennin

Clwyd Forest District
Berwyn
Coed Bryndansi
Coed Nant y Merddyn
Coed Pandy
Cynwyd Quarry
Mynydd Hiraethog
Rhyd y Foel
Worlds End

Dolgellau Forest District
Brynllin Fawr
Foel Friog
Glasdir Copper Mine
Hermon Copper Bog
Pistyll Cain

Llandovery Forest District
Cwm Doethe
Dolaucothi
Dyffryn
Garth
Pembrey
Slebech

Llanrwst Forest District
Aberllyn/Coed Mawr
Coed Aber
Cwm Crafnant
Eidda Pastures
Fairy Glen Woods
Llyn Bodgynydd
Llyn Bychan
Llyn Cwellyn
Llyn Goddionduon
Llyn Mymbyr
Llyn Pencraig
Morfa Harlech
Newborough
Pandora Reservoir
Tyn y Mynydd

Morgannwg Forest District
Blaen Nedd and Mellte
Blaen Rhondda Cutting
Craig y Llyn
Cwmgwrelych/Nant Llyn Fach
Darren y Dimbath
Llethrid Valley
Penmoelallt
Plas y gors

Newtown Forest District
Breidden
Copu Craig
Dyfnant Oakwood
Ffridd Mathrafal
Stanner Rocks

South East Wales Forest District
Castell Coch
Coed y Darren
Craig Wood
Livox Wood
Lower Hael
Lower Linenwell
Penarth Brook
Pysgodlyn Mawr
Talybont Reservoir
Wyndcliff

SCOTLAND
Aberfoyle Forest District
Ben An and Brenachoile Woods
Ben Lomond
Blackwater Marches
Brig o'Turk Mires
Comrie Woods
Craigrostan Woods
Cuilvona and Craigmore Woods
Drumore Woods
Eden Estuary
Fairyknowe and Doon Hill
Hawcraigs-Glenarbuck
Lake of Menteith
Lime Craig Quarry
Lime Hill
Loch Lubnaig Marshes
Lochmill Loch
Morton Lochs
Pass of Leny Flushes
Rowardennan Woodlands
Tayport to Tentsmuir Coast
Torflundie Mire

Ae Forest District
Longbridge Muir
Moffat Hills

Ayrshire and Arran Forest District
Ard Bheinn
Gleann Dubh
Penwhapple Burn

Borders Forest District
Kielderhead Moors
Langholm/Newcastleton Hills
Palmers Hill Railway Cutting

Buchan Forest District
Bin Quarry
Coreen Hills
Gight Woods
Greenhill-Strathdon
Hill of Towanreef
Mortlach Moss
Morven and Mullachdubh
Moss of Cruden

Castle Douglas Forest District
Abbeyburnfoot to Balcary Point
Cairnsmore of Fleet
Clatteringshaws Dam Quarry
Ellergower Moss
Lauchengie and Airie Hills
Lea Larks
Woodhall Loch

Cowal Forest District
Craigoyle
Glen Loin
Hell's Glenn
Loch Eck

Dornoch Forest District
Bad na Gallaig
Ben Klibreck
Ben More Assynt
Cnoc an Alaskie
Kinrive
Kyle of Sutherland Marshes
Loch Meadie Peatlands
Morrich More
Oliclett

Oykel Gorge
Shielton Peatlands
Strathrory
West Halladale

Fort Augustus Forest District
Affric—Cannich Hills
Easter Ness
Glen Affric
Inverfarigaig
Loch Bran
Moniack Gorge

Inverness Forest District
Allt Mhor
Belmaduthy Dam
Corrieshalloch Gorge
Little Mill
Monadh Mor
River Feshie

Kincardine Forest District
Muir of Dinnet

Kintyre Forest District
Artilligan and Abhain Strathan Burns
Balnabraid Glen
Bellochantuy and Tangy Gorges
Inverneill
Tarbert to Skipness Coast

Lochaber Forest District
Ben Hiant and Ardnamurchan Coast
Ben Nevis
Coille Puiteachan
Garry Falls
Loch Moidart
Loch Shiel
Lon Lianachan
Mile Dorcha
Parallel Roads of Lochaber
Salen to Woodend
South Laggan Fen
Strontian River

Loch Awe Forest District
Craignure Mine
Dalavich Oakwood

Lorne Forest District
Allt Brioghleachan
Allt Malach
Ard Trilleachan
Ben More
Coladoir
Crom Allt
Glasdrum
Glen Nant
Ross of Mull Coast
S'Aird Beinn
Sound of Mull Cliffs

Lothian and Tweed Forest District
Glenkinnon Burn
Plora Wood

Moray Forest District
Culbin Sands
Cutties Hillock Quarry
Kellas Oakwood
Lower River Spey
Spey Bay
Teindland

Newton Stewart Forest District
Blood Moss
Cairnbaber
Dowalton Loch
Glentrool Oakwoods
Merrick Kells
Mochrum Lochs
Talnotry Mine
Torrs Warren

Tay Forest District
Blackwood of Rannoch
Forest of Alyth Mires
Kinnoull Hill
Logierait Mires
Meall Reamhar
Red Craig
Schiehallion

Wester Ross Forest District
Allt Geod a'Hama
Ard Hill
Bealach Udal
Glen Valtos
Loch Maree Islands
Loch na Dal
Loch nan Eilean
South West Strath
Trotternish Ridge

Public Appointments

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all the names of public appointments that he has made, in each of the past six years, within the Strathclyde region, detailing in each case the organisation to which the appointment was made, the position held, the relevant qualifications of each appointee and the remuneration that each receives.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 8 June 1993]:* The addresses of appointees to non-departmental public bodies are not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. A full list of the names of appointees to NDPBs at 1 September 1992 was placed in the Library of the House in response to the question from the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) at column *392*.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Lone-parent Families

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the latest figures for the number of lone-parent families living on income support; and what proportion they make up of all lone-parent families.

Mr. Burt: In 1991 there were about 1·3 million lone parent families in Great Britain[1] of whom 0·871 million (67 per cent.) were living on income support[2]. In May 1992 there were 0·957 million lone parent families on income support[2]; no estimate is yet available of the number of lone parents in Great Britain in 1992.

[1] Office of Population Censuses and Survey.
[2] Income Support Statistics Annual Enquiries May 1991 and 1992. Figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand.

Maternity Allowances

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what the level of *(a)* the maternity grant and *(b)* the maternity expenses payment would be in 1993-94 if they had been uprated in line with inflation since their introduction.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is:
(a) maternity grant £75·30; and
(b) payments for maternity expenses £113·55.

Asbestos Claims

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the cost of a medical tribunal concerning the assessment of an asbestos claim.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available in the form requested.

Benefits Agency

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to require the Benefits Agency to publish in its business plan and customer charter the precise arrangements for compensation and ex-gratia payments.

Mr. Burt: The contents of the Benefits Agency customer charter are currently being reviewed. The next version of the agency's business plan will be published in spring 1994 and decisions on its contents will be made nearer the time.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to act upon the recommendation made by the Social Security Committee in its third report of Session 1992-93 on the priority which should be afforded under the new community care arrangements and by the new independent living funds to people prevented from making a claim to the original independent living fund due to delays in processing claims for disability living allowance and attendance allowance.

Mr. Scott: All applications to local authorities and to the new independent living (1993) fund will be dealt with on their individual merits. However, we will ensure that the trustees of the fund are aware of the committee's recommendations.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many disabled people had one or more of the weekly additional requirements for heating or laundry included in their supplementary benefit at the latest available date.

Mr. Burt: Such information as is available is for May 1987. At that date 189,000 people received an addition in respect of heating on the ground of disability. This figure does not include those disabled people entitled to a heating addition of a higher amount for reasons other than disability.

A total of 553,000 people recieved a laundry addition. It is not possible to say what proportion received it on the ground of disability rather than other criteria such as illness, infirmity or inadequate washing facilities at home.

The complicated arrangements of the supplementary benefits scheme were replaced in 1988 by the simpler income support scheme. This aims to direct extra help via premiums to groups identified as likely to have extra needs, such as the disabled.

Source: Supplementary Benefit Statistics Annual Enquiry, May 1987.

Disability Benefits

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many requests for a review of disability living allowance have been received to date by his Department; and how many and what percentage of awards were *(a)* maintained, *(b)* allowed, *(c)* disallowed, *(d)* increased, *(e)* varied, *(f)* reduced and *(g)* outstanding.

Mr. Scott: The information is in the table. The figures are for the period up to 31 May 1993 which are the most recent available.

Disability living allowance

	Number of Reviews	*Percentage*
Received	133,234	—
(a) Maintained (Original award upheld)	46,316	34·8
(b) Allowed (Original disallowance overturned)	28,926	21·7
(c) Disallowed (Original disallowance upheld)	3,794	2·8
(d) Increased (Original award increased)	11,501	8·6
(e) Varied (Rate of award unchanged but duration varied)	1,631	1·2
(f) Reduced (Original award reduced)	124	0·1
Others[1]	3,029	2·3
(g) Outstanding	37,913	28·5

Notes:
[1] Others include reviews that are withdrawn, lapsed, defective or where there are no grounds for a review to be made.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people were in receipt of *(a)* disability premium and *(b)* severe disability premium at the latest available date.

Mr. Burt: The latest available information for income support relates to May 1992.[1] At that time the number of people whose applicable amount included a disability premium was 425,000. The severe disability premium was included in 100,000 cases.

For housing benefit (HB) and community charge benefit (CCB) the latest information relates to May 1991.[2] The number of HB and CCB cases not in receipt of income support with a disability premium or severe disability premium is in the table. Many CCB cases are also in receipt of HB.

	Housing benefit cases	*Community charge benefit cases*
With disability premium	163,000	217,000
With severe disability premium	15,000	26,000

Note:
[1] *Source:* Income Support Statistics Annual Enquiry, May 1992.
[2] *Source:* Housing Benefit and Community Charge Benefit Management Information System Annual Sample, May 1991.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the numbers of people who claimed disability living allowance or attendance allowance prior to 3 September 1992 who would have met the qualifying criteria for the former independent living fund but had still not been notified of the outcome of their claim for either of these benefits by 25 November 1992.

Mr. Scott: It is not possible to make a reliable estimate.

Income Support

Mr. Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, in the light of the recent report by the National Audit Office on income support for the self-employed, what conditions apply to people who claim income support and are engaged in self-employment.

Mr. Lilley: A person claiming income support may carry out some part time work, but this must generally be for less than 16 hours per week. This is regardless of whether the person is an employee or self-employed. In general, however, they must be registered as unemployed and available for and actively seeking work as an employed earner. In addition, earnings above £5 per week (£15 for lone parents) reduce income support entitlement pound for pound. Some of the coverage of the national audit report in the news media did not sufficiently emphasise these conditions and may therefore have created a misleading impression of the extent to which support for those conducting their own business is available from income support.

The principal benefit for people with children and who are working for 16 hours or more per week is family credit. Family credit is currently paid to 70,000 self-employed people, who receive an average of £55 per week each.

Walsall Council (Bus Passes)

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the latest position regarding his Department's contact with Walsall council over the latter's refusal to allow blind persons in receipt of the disability living allowance to have the concessionary bus pass.

Mr. Scott: On 24 May, the council wrote to the Department with its further observations on section 73(14) of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992. The Department replied on 25 May and remains engaged in discussions with the council.

Invalidity Benefit

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what plans he has to introduce regulations on the basis of European Court of Justice Case No. 328/91, 30 March; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he now expects the House of Lords to resume the proceedings of the case concerning Evelyn Thomas et al which was referred to the European Court of Justice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The European Court has remitted case No. 328/91 back to the House of Lords for final determination. We have not been notified of a hearing date. Legislative proposals will be developed in the light of that determination.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide an estimate of the expenditure and caseload take-up of *(a)* housing benefit for people who are not on income support and *(b)* community charge benefit.

Mr. Burt: The latest available take-up estimates for income-related benefits are for 1989. Take-up of housing benefit for people not on income support is estimated at 83 per cent. by expenditure and 74 per cent. by caseload. Estimates for community charge benefit are not available.

Smoke Alarms

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what studies have been made of the cost-effectiveness of providing deaf and hard of hearing people on low incomes with financial support to purchase smoke alarms.

Mr. Burt: No studies have been made.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Asil Nadir

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Attorney-General how many *(a)* written and *(b)* oral representations he received from hon. Members regarding the case of Mr. Nadir before his departure from the United Kingdom.

The Attorney-General: I and my predecessor have received written representations from five hon. Members and can recall oral representations from two hon. Members about the Polly Peck investigation and prosecution.

DEFENCE

Defence Analytical Services Agency

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what performance targets have been set for the Defence Analytical Services Agency for 1993-94.

Mr. Hanley: The agency's key targets for this financial year and beyond have been revised to reflect the continuing need to secure economies in defence spending and an increased capability to meet the Department's evolving needs. They build on progress already made by the agency in meeting those targets set at its launch in July 1992. The revised targets are as follows.

Delivery of customer service

(a) About three-quarters of the Agency's business is suitable for coverage by Service Level Agreements with customers, which set out targets and standards for the level of service, timeliness and quality of work. For this part of the business key targets are:

(i) to increase the coverage to 75 per cent. for Service Level Agreements in the areas suitable;

(ii) to meet at least 95 per cent. of the timeliness and quality targets set in the established Service Level Agreements.

(b) For the remaining parts of the business (for which Service Level Agreements are not appropriate) the target is to meet at least 95 per cent. of the timeliness and quality targets in each Project Agreement.

(c) For all parts of the business, a key target is to achieve, in the annual Customer Satisfaction Survey, at least 90 per cent. of customers expressing themselves satisfied or better with the timeliness, quality of work, and helpfulness of staff.

Efficiency and use of Resources

(d) The Agency will be expected, by using improved information technology, to produce its routine output more efficiently. The Chief Executive is therefore required to increase efficiency in the production of regular statistical reports by 5 per cent. in 1993-94 and by 10 per cent. over the two years 1993-95. In line with general Ministry of Defence manpower reductions the Chief Executive is, by 1 April 1994, required to complete a reduction in manpower to a level 20 per cent. below the 1990 baseline manning level.

RAF Personnel

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) of 10 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *800*, if he can now announce further conclusions about personnel numbers in the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Hanley: All service manpower requirements, including that of the RAF are kept under continuous review.

Over the next two years, the impact of civilianisation, market testing, developments in technology, economies in the support area and other efficiency measures, will lead to a reduced number of personnel required in the RAF. This reduction is made possible largely because of better use of manpower and resources.

We are taking steps to bring down numbers in line with this changing requirement. In part, this can be done by natural turnover and by reducing recruitment. A number of redundancies will also be required to help adjust imbalances between manpower categories: in certain areas there is a surplus of manpower; in other areas there are shortages. The precise number will remain under review, but we estimate that up to 2,200 redundancies will be sought before 1 April 1995. The majority of these redundancies are attributable to factors which do not affect the operational capability of the service.

The same redundancy terms will apply as for the previous phase of redundancies. Volunteers will now be sought. We hope that, as in the past, the majority of those selected for redundancy will be volunteers.

These arrangements will allow the RAF to reduce its support costs while retaining the ability to meet its operational commitments.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he is taking to strengthen British forces in the former Yugoslavia theatre of operations.

Mr. Rifkind: Following the adoption of resolution 836 by the United Nations Security Council on 4 June, a squadron of Jaguar aircraft of the Royal Air Force is being offered to NATO to participate if necessary in air operations to support UNPROFOR authorised by paragraph 10 of the resolution.

We have a battalion group deployed in Bosnia as part of UNPROFOR. We have no plans to send additional major units. We maintain contingency plans to provide additional protection for our forces should circumstances warrant, through both maritime and land based assets. To complement these existing arrangements, a number of Army units and individual officers and men are being placed at readiness to move to former Yugoslavia at short notice to provide a range of options should the need to protect our forces make this necessary. It will not be necessary to deploy them to theatre as part of this precautionary plan.

Tomahawk Missiles

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his United States counterpart on the possible procurement of Tomahawk cruise missiles by his Department.

Mr. Aitken: My right hon. and learned Friend has had no such discussions.

Porton Down

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many liaison officers from the United States Department of Defense have been stationed at his Department's chemical and biological warfare establishment at Porton Down since 1963; if he will outline the functions undertaken by such visiting liaison officers; and how many came as part of the technical co-operation programme;

(2) what collaboration has taken place between his Department and the Government of Australia in relation to chemical and biological defence since 1962;

(3) how many achievement awards have been granted under the technical co-operation programme at the chemical and biological defence establishment at Porton Down in each year since 1963; what was the scientific purpose behind each award made; and if he will make a statement on the role and function of the technical co-operation programme.

Mr. Hanley: These are matters for the chief executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment and I have asked him to reply.

Letter from Graham Pearson to Mr. Elfyn Llwyd, dated 10 June 1993

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking how many liaison officers from the United States Department of Defense have been stationed at his Department's Chemical and Biological Warfare Establishment at Porton Down since 1963; if he will outline the functions undertaken by such visiting liaison officers; and how many came as part of the Technical Co-operation Programme (Question 16, Order Paper, 27 May 1993) has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. Four US Army liaison officers were stationed at Porton Down from 1963 to 1973. After 1973, liaison has continued at a much reduced level through the US Army Standardisation Office in London. The original US Army liaison officers were first appointed in 1942 and pre-date the Tripartite Conferences and the later TTCP. They have their roots in informal World War II co-operation. Their functions appear to have been to act as a channel for the exchange of information and to observe and participate in relevant trials of interest to the United States.

3. Since 1973, there have been a number of attachments of US civilian and military officers to Porton Down who have been engaged in the work of particular Divisions; they have not had a general liaison responsibility. These attachments have been under either the Technical Co-operation Programme or the UK/US/Canada Memorandum of Understanding on chemical and biological defence. During the past 10 years we have had some six attachments lasting for about a year or longer in addition to short term visits.

Letter from Graham Pearson to Mr. Elfyn Llwyd, dated 10 June 1993:

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking what collaboration has taken place between his Department and the Government of Australia in relation to chemical and biological defence since 1962 (Question 18, Order Paper, 27 May 1993) has been passed to me to answer as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. Collaboration between the United Kingdom and the Government of Australia on chemical and biological defence has taken place under the following international agreements which include chemical and biological defence in their scope:

a. The United Kingdom-United States-Canada-Australia American, British and Canadian Armies (ABCA) agreement between the armies of the four countries. This includes a group known as the Quadripartite Working Group (QWG) which has a Panel on NBC defence.
b. The United Kingdom-United States-Canada-Australia Air Standardisation Coordinating Committee which has a sub group addressing CB defence.
c. The Technical Cooperation Programme which involves the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand is concerned with collaboration in defence research and has a sub group that is active on CB defence.
d. The Anglo-Australian Memorandum of Understanding on Research (AAMOUR) which was preceded by the Australian/UK Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Defence Research and Development and which contained some CB defence related topics.
e. A Memorandum of Agreement between the UK and Australia relating to a joint programme of reseach, investigation and material testing at the JTTRE which was an out-station of the Materiels Research Laboratory (MRL) of the Australian Department of Defence and is now designated as MRL-Queensland.

3. In addition, I would refer you to the replies to several recent questions on the testing of chemical and biological defence equipment in Australia (29 June 1992, Offical Report, Column 412; 16 July 1992, Official Report, Column 937; and 1 December 1992, Official Report, Column 162).

Letter from Graham Pearson to Mr. Elfyn Llwyd, dated 10 June 1993:

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking how many achievement awards have been granted under the Technical Co-operation Programme at the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment at Porton Down in each year since 1963; what was the scientific purpose behind each award made; and if he will make a statement on the role and function of the Technical Co-operation Programme (Question 21, Order Paper, 27 May 1993) has been passed to me to answer as Chief Executive of the Chemcial and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. At their 25th Anniversary meeting in October 1983 the Non-Atomic Military Research and Development (NAMRAD) Principals agreed that they should establish an award to mark outstanding collaboration in defence research undertaken under the auspices of the Technical Co-operation Programme (TTCP). The basic purpose of the award is to provide recognition to defence scientists and visibility to defence research which adds to the defence postures of all countries. Only outstanding co-operative research work is considered for such awards and must represent original research which can provide breakthroughs in defence technologies. The first award was made in 1985 and there have been three awards to CBDE scientists as follows:

(a) In 1985 an award was made for research in the field of "Ion mobility spectrometry for chemical warfare agent detection".
(b) In 1990 an award was made for research on the chemcial and biological threat of aerosolized agents.
(c) In 1991 an award was made for work on the specification for ASC/TEDA charcoal.

3. Insofar as to the role and function of the Technical Cooperation Programme are concerned, I would refer you to the reply given by the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, The Right Honourable Archie Hamilton, MP, of 1 December 1992, Official Report, column 160 which sets out the original purpose behind the TTCP. The Technical Co-operation Programme provides a means of acquainting the participating countries with each others defence research and development programmes so that each national programme may be adjusted and planned in recognition of the efforts of the other nations. This process supplements each programme with the knowledge and capabilities of the other countries, avoids unnecessary duplication among the national programmes, promotes concerted action to identify and close important gaps in the collective technology base, and assure to each country the best technical information available for advice to their Governments and military forces on all matters related to defence research and development.

Bowman Project

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to announce the allocation of the development contracts for the Bowman project.

Mr. Aitken: I expect to announce the award of the contracts for the project definition phase of the Bowman combat radio system within the next two to three months.

Warheads (Plutonium)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) of 24 May, *Official Report*, column *456*, what is his estimate of the amount of fissile plutonium contained in the 12,000 warheads to which he refers.

Mr. Hanley: It is difficult to give a precise figure but about 30 to 36 tonnes of fissile plutonium are contained in the 12,000 warheads.

Nuclear Non-proliferation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what matters were discussed and what decisions taken in regard to nuclear non-proliferation in NATO's defence planning committee and nuclear planning group in Brussels on 25 to 26 May.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Member to paragraph 17 of the communiqué issued after the meeting, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

F3 Tornado

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the number of F3 Tornados to be modified under the Airwork Services contract prior to the termination of the Airwork Ltd. F3 Tornado modification contract.

Mr. Aitken: Up to 134 Tornado F3 aircraft were due to be modified under the contract with Airwork Ltd.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) when he expects to decide on legal action against Airwork Ltd. with respect to damage caused to F3 Tornados in the course of the modification contract carried out at RAF St. Athan in 1992-93;

(2) what estimates he has made of the cost of rectification of the damage done in the course of the F3 Tornado modification contract carried out by the Airwork Ltd. at RAF St. Athan.

Mr. Aitken: The Department intends to claim against Airwork Ltd. for the cost of rectifying damage to Tornado F3 aircraft and other financial penalties arising from Airwork's failure properly to execute the aircraft modification contract. It will take some time to establish the full extent of these costs.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the commission given to Royal Aeronautical Establishment, Farnborough, with respect

to the damage caused to F3 Tornados in the course of the Airwork Ltd. modification contract carried out at RAF St. Athan in 1992-93.

Mr. Aitken: The Defence Research Agency has been tasked by my Department to provide independent advice on the structural assessment which has been requested from the aircraft design authority—Deutsche Aerospace —for the relevant sections of the airframe.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the impact on United Kindom defence capabilities of the grounding of non-airworthy F3 Tornados damaged in the course of the modification contract carried out by Airwork Ltd. at RAF St. Athan.

Mr. Aitken: It has no significant impact on United Kingdom defence capabilities. The fleet strength includes an allowance for aircraft which are lost or grounded as a result of accidents or in-service modification programmes.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations were made by Airwork Ltd. regarding the termination of the contract for F3 Tornado modification work carried out at RAF St. Athan in relation to the company's maintenance contracts in the middle east.

Mr. Aitken: I am not aware of any such representations.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations were made by Airwork Ltd. for an extension of the turn-round time for F3 Tornado modification work carried out at RAF St. Athan; what response was made by the RAF; and what was the final decision in relation to possible extension.

Mr. Aitken: Officials in my Department did receive representations from Airwork Ltd. requesting a relaxation in the turn-round time requirement of this contract. These were being considered at the time the contract was terminated.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what investigations were undertaken into the ultimate ownership and credit worthiness of Airwork Ltd. of Hurn airport, Bournemouth, before the award of the contract for modification of the F3 Tornados for 1992-93.

Mr. Aitken: Airwork Ltd. is on the defence contractor's list, and as such has been the subject of our normal inquiries as to ownership and credit worthiness. We are satisfied that the company's financial position was adequate for a contract of this nature.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the termination of the Airwork Ltd. contract for F3 Tornado modification.

Mr. Aitken: The contract with Airwork Ltd. for Tornado F3 fatigue modification work was terminated when it was established that the company's performance was sufficiently unsatisfactory to justify such action on the grounds of breach of contract.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has for assessment of the relative value of quality assurance certificate ISO9001 as against active quality assurance trials in subcontracted RAF aircraft modification work.

Mr. Aitken: My Department's investigation into the contract with Airwork Ltd. for modification of RAF F3 Tornados will include a review of the adequacy of the quality assurance arrangements.

Combat Aircraft (Modifications)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has to re-assess the use of market testing, privatisation, compulsory competitive tendering, and contractorisation in modification work on RAF combat aircraft; and what proposals he has to include RAF in-house tenders in all such combat aircraft modification work.

Mr. Aitken: I have no plans to reassess these programmes which are intended to achieve better value for money from defence expenditure. It remains our policy to contractorise work which could be done by industry where it is cost effective to do so in a way that fully meets our requirements; we will encourage in-house bids where appropriate. We continue to place a heavy emphasis on ensuring that work carried out by contractors meets our exacting quality standards, and we will take firm action where we judge that this is not the case.

Iraq

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursant to his answer of 2 April, *Official Report*, column 510, if he has now obtained a copy of the CIA report on Iraq's military capabilities.

Mr. Hanley: No; although requested, a copy has not yet been passed to the United Kingdom.

Military Presence Overseas

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what criteria are used for deciding which countries retain a British military presence and in which this presence is curtailed or abandoned.

Mr. Hanley: British forces are stationed overseas to ensure the protection and security of our dependent territories; as part of our contribution to the North Atlantic Alliance; and to contribute to promoting the United Kingdom's wider security interests through the maintenance of international peace and stability. These correspond to the three overlapping defence roles set out in the 1992 "Statement on the Defence Estimates". Overseas commitments are entered into, adjusted or ended only after lengthy consideration, and where appropriate consultation, on a case-by-case basis.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the annual costs of retaining a British military presence in each overseas country in which United Kingdom troops were stationed in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Hanley: I will write to the hon. Member.

Brunei

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the cost of *(a)* British military personnel and *(b)* British military equipment in Brunei in (i) 1979, (ii) 1985 and (iii) the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Hanley: The costs of military personnel or equipment stationed in Brunei under the current memorandum of understanding with HM the Sultan of Brunei are met in full by the Government of Brunei. Records of the costs for these forces are not available in the form requested but the following information is available by financial year:

£ million

	1981-82	1984-85	1985-86	1992-93
Personnel	3·6	6·1	9·0	11·0
Equipment	1·1	2·9	[1]3·2	4·2
Total	4·7	9·0	12·2	15·2

[1] This figure includes elements that are not included in the equipment costs for other years but which are not separately identifiable.

The costs of the Army's jungle training school in Brunei are met by the Ministry of Defence. The available full cost figures for this facility are as follows:

£ million

	1989-90	1990-91
Total cost	2·3	1·9

Desert Storm Syndrome

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the United States authorities on the subject of Desert Storm syndrome.

Mr. Hanley: There have been no such discussions.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will establish an investigation into the illness known as Desert Storm syndrome amongst members of the British armed forces who served in the Gulf conflict.

Mr. Hanley: The health of all service personnel is monitored as a matter of routine and regular medical checks are carried out. There is currently no evidence of members of the British armed forces who served in the Gulf conflict suffering from any unexplained symptoms which would call for such an investigation.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of the British armed forces who served in the gulf war have reported sickness popularly known as Desert Storm syndrome; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The armed forces medical services are not aware of any such reports being made by individual service patients. Nor are the armed forces medical services aware of changes in patterns of morbidity among the United Kingdom service population which would indicate the sickness popularly known as Desert Storm syndrome.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 11 June 1993

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Departmental Buildings

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the buildings currently owned or rented by his Department, together with *(a)* the estimated value, *(b)* the annual rent and *(c)* the annual maintenance cost of each building in the current financial year.

Mr. John M. Taylor: On 1 April 1993, the Lord Chancellor's Department occupied some 512 buildings. These comprise:

Departmental Estate[1]		*Common User Estate*[2]	
Freehold	*Leasehold*	*Freehold*	*Leasehold*
138	95	72	207

[1] Departmental Estate: LCD has full responsibility for maintenance of these buildings and meeting the terms and conditions of any leaseholds, including payment of rent to landlords.

[2] Common User Estate: The responsibility for meeting the terms and conditions of any leaseholds, including payment of rent to landlords, is with Property Holdings. LCD has some maintenance liability but the extent of this will vary according to the maintenance option appropriate to each building.

Due to the substantial number of buildings occupied, these have not been listed, but a full list is available should the hon. Member require it.

Estimated value is not available. To carry out a full valuation would incur disproportionate costs. In common with most other Government Departments, my Department is required to pay annually the full opportunity cost rent to Property Holdings for all properties except those held leasehold on the departmental estate. For the latter, the actual rent due under the terms of the lease is paid direct to landlords. If this is lower than the opportunity cost rent, the balance is payable to Property Holdings. This ensures that we are fully aware of the estimated current market rent of all accommodation occupied. In 1993-94, our opportunity cost rent and actual liability is expected to be some £76 million. We also expect to spend some £11 million on maintaining our estate.

EDUCATION

School Meals

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the level of public expenditure on the school meal service in each year since 1979 in cash and real terms.

Mr. Forth: Expenditure on school meals by local education authorities in England is given in the table.

LEA expenditure on school meals 1979-80—1991-92

	Expenditure (Cash) (£ million)	*Expenditure (1992-93 prices) (£ million)*
1979-80	422	1,012
1980-81	397	804
1981-82	396	732
1982-83	411	709
1983-84	426	702
1984-85	428	671
1985-86	436	649
1986-87	457	659
1987-88	443	605
1988-89	376	479
1989-90	379	453
1990-91	384	425
1991-92	407	421

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish a table showing the latest figures for the number and proportion of children receiving school meals broken down into *(a)* paid and *(b)* free in each region of England.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is shown in the table.

School meal arrangements of day-pupils in maintained schools in the regions of England—January 1992

	Pupils taking school meals		*As a percentage of day-pupils on roll*	
Region	*Free*	*Paid*	*Free*	*Paid*
North	88,783	175,948	18	35
Yorkshire and Humberside	120,243	270,394	15	35
North West	191,352	297,469	19	29
East Midlands	68,415	185,960	11	30
West Midlands	133,311	230,581	16	28
East Anglia	27,657	71,976	9	25
Greater London	169,787	242,166	18	26
Other South East	134,528	398,334	9	27
South West	68,272	154,970	11	24
England	1,001,968	2,027,798	14	28

Drug and Alcohol Advisers

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many health education co-ordinators advising on drugs and alcohol have been funded by his Department in Cheshire since 1979;

(2) how many health education co-ordinators advising on drugs and alcohol have been funded by his Department in the whole of the United Kingdom since 1979.

Mr. Forth: The Department made education support grant to local education authorities in England for drug education from 1986-87 to 1989-90, and for preventive health education from 1990-91 to 1992-93. During that seven-year period, most LEAs, including Cheshire, used the grant to employ at least one drug or health education co-ordinator.

Expenditure

Sir Rhodes Boyson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total amount of expenditure on services within the responsibility of his Department in *(a)* England, *(b)* Greater London and *(c)* the south-east,

excluding Greater London, for each year since 1982-83 and his estimate for 1992-93, distinguishing between current and capital expenditure and excluding local authority credit approvals/capital allocations.

Mr. Forth: The information is not wholly available in the form requested. For part *(a)*, table A gives details of central and local government expenditure on education in England since 1982-83. For parts *(b)* and *(c)*, figures are readily available for local authority expenditure by region only from 1989-90: these are shown in table B. It is not possible to estimate the proportion of central Government expenditure relating to these regions.

Table A
Total Expenditure on Education in England (£m) (cash)

	Central Government		Local Government	
	Recurrent	Capital	Recurrent	Capital
1982-83	1,588	161	10,279	456
1983-84	1,657	157	10,826	469
1984-85	1,713	170	11,266	501
1985-86	1,784	191	11,642	530
1986-87	1,851	202	12,912	577
1987-88	1,835	206	14,573	604
1988-89	2,007	238	15,272	777
1989-90	3,100	367	15,887	903
1990-91	3,205	394	17,302	813
1991-92	3,065	489	19,850	793
[1]1992-93	3,315	513	21,674	940

[1](estimates)

Notes to Table A

Central Government

1. Figures include grants for universities *in Great Britain* distributed by the University Grants Committee (up to 1988-89) and the Universities Funding Council. Other figures are for England only.
2. Figures exclude expenditure on mandatory awards and specific grants, which appear in the Local Government column.

Local Government

3. Figures for 1991-92 and 1992-93 are taken from local authority RA returns as submitted in 1991-92.
4. Figures include some spending financed by grants which are the responsibility of other Government Departments—TVEI, work-related FE. Figures also include receipts from PCFC and mandatory awards. Figures for mandatory awards include expenditure in Wales.
5. Figures for 1990-91 exclude £366 million in unspent balances held by schools under LMS schemes.
6. Figures for capital are gross capital spending and include schools, FE and Youth and other educational services.

Table B
Total local authority expenditure on education (£ million) (cash)

	Greater London[2]		South East (excluding Greater London)	
	Recurrent	Capital	Recurrent	Capital
1989-90	2,576	195	3,082	199
1990-91	2,713	192	3,415	177
1991-92[1]	3,049	143	3,873	167

Notes to Table B

[1] Figures for recurrent are net recurrent expenditure, which includes total expenditure other than capital financing charges, less income other than from Government grants. Figures are drawn from local authority revenue outturn reports and therefore those for 1991-92 are not directly comparable with the corresponding figures in Table A.

[2] "Greater London" consists of the 13 inner London LEAs (ILEA for 1989-90) and the 20 outer London LEAs. "South East" consists of Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Essex, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, Surrey and West Sussex LEAs.

Education Authority Staff

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many *(a)* officers and *(b)* other persons are employed by each education authority in England and Wales.

Mr. Forth *[pursuant to his reply, 8 June 1993, c. 206.]*: Tables showing the number of teachers and lecturers and of other staff employed in the education service of each local authority have been placed in the Library. These have been compiled by the Local Government Management Board from the March 1992 joint staffing watch return, and cover all staff in the LEA-maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools sector, special and further education, and central administration.

WALES

Welsh Language Board

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the terms of reference, remuneration, length of appointment and working hours of the chairman-designate of the Welsh Language Board.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Subject to Parliament's approval of the Welsh Language Bill, Lord Elis-Thomas will be appointed chairman for a three-year term beginning on the date on which the board is established. His work as chairman will involve a time commitment of two days a week and remuneration of £20,544. I will, in due course, issue the board and its chairman with broad strategic guidance based on the framework which the Welsh Language Bill establishes.

Urban Investment Grant

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all projects in receipt of urban investment grant in each of the past eight quarterly periods, the amount of grant given and the value of the development, the estimated jobs to be created and the business names and addresses of the companies making the application.

Mr. Redwood: A list of all projects in receipt of urban investment grant in the last eight quarterly periods and the amount of grant given is set out in table 1, together with a list in table 2 giving the name of the developer, total amount of grant approved, private sector investment and estimated jobs to be created. The addresses of the applicants have not been included, as it is not the Department's policy to divulge such information.

Table 1

Quarter and project	Grant paid £
April—June 1991	
Foundry Road, Hirwaun	5,319
Mount Street, Bangor	5,046
Rhondda Heritage Park Hotel, Trehafod	83,944
Capel Bethlehem, Merthyr Tydfil	33,478
Ystrad Road, Pentre	37,500
Tredegar Town Centre	184,417
Brynteg Chapel, Abertillery	6,865
Helliwell's Factory, Aberdare	340,000
July—September 1991	
Capel Bethlehem, Merthyr Tydfil	21,044
Tredegar Town Centre	241,493
Ystrad Road, Pentre	22,500

Quarter and project	Grant paid £
Helliwell's Factory, Aberdare	40,000
Mill Street, Tonyrefail	26,528
Foundry Road, Hirwaun	31,915
Rhondda Heritage Park Hotel, Trehafod	172,622
Oaklands Business Park, Ferndale	93,999
Wenallt Park, Treharris	19,250
October—December 1991	
Helliwell's Factory, Aberdare	20,000
Tredegar Town Centre	131,276
Rhondda Heritage Park Hotel, Trehafod	188,312
January—March 1992	
Capel Bethlehem, Merthyr Tydfil	22,000
Tredegar Town Centre	220,016
Wenallt Park, Treharris	18,983
Goat Mill Road, Dowlais	300,000
Cross Street, Treharris	5,000
Quay West, Swansea	223,197
St. David's Church, Aberdare	23,505
Llewellyn's Quay, Port Talbot	82,873
April—June 1992	
Mount Street, Bangor	22,875
Tredegar Town Centre	47,614
Brynteg Chapel, Abertillery	889
Llewellyn's Quay, Port Talbot	12,127
Cross Street, Treharris	5,000
St. David's Church, Aberdare	19,495
July—September 1992	
Cross Street, Treharris	10,000
Tredegar Town Centre	105,887
Quay West, Swansea	57,361
Wenallt Park, Treharris	19,250
October—December 1992	
Tredegar Town Centre	62,546
Old Bus Station, Merthyr Tydfil	58,608
Quay West, Swansea	80,176
Warwill's Foundry, Abertillery	112,805
Cardiff Road, Aberaman	56,015
January—March 1993	
Clase Road, Morriston	159,695
Old Bus Station, Merthyr Tydfil	23,573
Cardiff Road, Aberaman	82,739
Cromwell Service Station, Newport	169,286
King Street, Mold	56,828
Tredegar Town Centre	48,432
Gelliwastad Grove, Pontypridd	68,365
Quay West, Swansea	89,267
Warwill's Foundry, Abertillery	37,195
Blaenant Business Park	25,000
Brynteg Chapel, Abertillery	1,837
Letchworth Road, Ebbw Vale	18,000
Harold Wilson Industrial Estate, Caerphilly	90,924
Wenallt Park, Treharris	11,550

Table 2

Project	Developer	Grant £ million	Private investment £ million	Forecast permanent jobs
Foundry road, Hirwaun	Eastbrook Developments	0·250	1·668	—
Mount street, Bangor	Llanrhos Property Company Ltd.	0·066	0·343	—
Rhondda Heritage Park Hotel, Trehafod	Celtic Bay Hotels Ltd.	0·625	1·710	35
Capel Bethleham	Bailey Homes plc	0·220	1·853	—
Ystrad road, Pentre	Checkdial Ltd.	0·150	0·323	45
Tredegar town centre	Amodeo Scott Development Company Ltd.	3·500	6·860	136
Brynteg Chapel, Abertillery	Quality Property Development Company Ltd.	0·025	0·170	—
Helliwell's Factory, Aberdare	Barry Dock Marine Services Ltd.	0·400	1·538	500
Mill street, Tonyrefail	Corlan Housing Association	0·075	0·396	—
Oaklands Business Park, Ferndale	Berkley and Hay Hill plc	0·940	1·475	214
Wenallt park, Treharris	Luteteam Ltd.	0·077	0·567	—
Goat Mill road, Dowlais	Breamvalley Estates Ltd.	0·315	0·745	60
Cross street, Treharris	Arrow Builders	0·130	1·066	—
Quay West, Swansea	Quay Parade Ltd.	0·500	4·440	150
St. David's Church, Aberdare	Davies Brothers	0·043	0·140	15
Llewellyn's Quay, Port Talbot	Comfort House Investments Ltd.	0·175	0·682	120
Old Bus Station, Merthyr Tydfil	Redrow Homes (South Wales) Ltd.	0·250	2·912	—
Warwill's Foundry, Abertillery	Hawkswood Properties Ltd.	0·150	1·319	80
Cardiff road, Aberaman	Beazer Urban Developments (Wales and West)	0·328	1·614	—
Clase road, Morriston	Castle Leisure Ltd.	0·200	2·392	80
Cromwell Service Station, Newport	Sinclair Garages	0·245	1·052	33
King Street, Mold	MPH (North Wales) Ltd.	0·070	0·383	16
Gelliwastad Grove, Pontypridd	Davies Homes Ltd. Investments Ltd.	0·130	0·303	58
Blaenant Business Park	Short Brothers	0·025	0·158	16
Letchworth road, Ebbw Vale	Barakat Property Developers	0·084	1·172	—
Harold Wilson Industrial Estate, Caerphilly	G. A. Spacey (Management Services) Ltd.	0·136	0·545	50

School Transport

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to review safety practices for school transport.

Sir Wyn Roberts: It is the responsibility of school authorities to satisfy themselves that the school transport operatives with whom they contract maintain and operate their vehicles safely. Nevertheless, the Government are concerned to improve the safety of children travelling on school transport and continually seeks ways to ensure their safety. In particular, regulations are to be introduced shortly to require certain buses, carrying children to and from school, to display a distinctive warning sign. In addition, the Government are pressing the European Community to require seat belts to be fitted to all seats on new coaches and minibuses.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many maintenance assessment forms have been issued by the Child Support Agency since 5 April; how many completed forms have been returned to the agency; and how many maintenance assessments have been calculated and put into operation.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Mrs. Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Barry Jones, dated 10 June 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Child Support Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many maintenance assessment forms have been issued by the Agency since 5 April, how many completed forms have been returned to the Agency and how many maintenance assessments have been calculated and put into action.

It is as yet very early days in the setting up of the Agency but we do have reliable figures for the month of April which, allowing for the Easter break, covered the Agency's first 17 working days. For that period, from 5 April to 30 April, more than 45,000 Maintenance Application Forms were issued and over 19,000 completed forms were returned. Twenty-five maintenance assessments were calculated and the parents notified.

The process of assessing maintenance under the Child Support Act of its nature takes some time, as it involves first the parent with care completing a form (the Maintenance Assessment Form) to enable the absent parent to be traced and sent a second form (the Maintenance Enquiry Form) for completion. Both forms need to be checked for accuracy before a computer assessment can be made.

In a straightforward case, when both parents reply quickly and fully and supply all the necessary information, we have estimated that it will take 6-8 weeks from the date of application to assess the maintenance which is payable. Many cases are not straightforward, however, and further enquiries are necessary from either or both parents. This lengthens clearance times but I am confident the Agency has got off to a successful start.

I hope this reply is useful. It will be published in the Official Record and a copy placed in the Library.

Social Security Tribunal

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give his reasons for exercising his power under regulation 37 of the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations 1987 not to carry out a decision of the social security tribunal in the case of a Woolwich constituent, NI. No. NA 46 48 05 A.

Mr. Burt: The administration of family credit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. John Austin-Walker, dated 11 June 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking if he will give his reasons for exercising his power under Regulation 37 of the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations 1987 not to carry out a decision of the Social Security Tribunal in the case of a Woolwich constituent, NI No. NA 46 48 05 A.

As you will be aware, your constituent made a claim to Family Credit on 25 February 1992 which was subsequently disallowed by the Adjudication Officer, and was the subject of three independent tribunal hearings between 29 July 1992 and 7 April 1993; the result of which was that the Tribunal ruled that your constituent was to be treated as an agent of the Post Office. This was contrary to a Commissioner's Decision (RFC 1/93) which ruled that sub-postmasters are to be treated as employees of the Post Office. The Adjudication Officer considered that the Tribunal had erred in law by not taking account of the Commissioner's decision and therefore exercised his right under Regulation 37 of the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations 1987 by seeking further advice from the office of the Central Adjudication Services with a view to ascertaining if any aspects of the Tribunal decision could give rise to a further appeal to the Commissioner. In this case however, the Central Adjudication Services (CAS) considered that the Tribunal had erred in law, but that the circumstances of the case were the same as the existing Commissioner's Decision and there was therefore no need to seek further leave to appeal, and the Tribunal decision is to be implemented. I shall write to you separately and in greater detail about this matter.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

Disability Working Allowance

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will provide a breakdown by number and percentage of the total number of *(a)* initial and *(b)* renewal claims for disability working allowance received by his Department that were refused on the grounds that (i) the claimant was not in remunerative work, (ii) the claimant's income was above the limit, (iii) the claimant was not in receipt of a qualifying benefit, (iv) the claimant was receiving family credit, (v) the joint income of the claimant and his or her partner exceeded the limit, (vi) the claimant was working less than 16 hours a week and (vii) for other reasons;

(2) how many people are currently getting the disability working allowance; and if he will break this total down by *(a)* average age, *(b)* sex, *(c)* marital status, *(d)* average hourly earnings, *(e)* average hours worked, *(f)* householder status and *(g)* qualifying benefit.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability working allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Keith Bradley, dated 11 June 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking (1) if he will provide a breakdown by number and percentage of the total number of *(a)* initial and *(b)* renewal claims for disability working allowance received by his Department that were refused on the grounds that (i) the claimant was not in remunerative work, (ii) the claimant's income was above the limit, (iii) the claimant was not in receipt of a qualifying benefit, (iv) the claimant was receiving family credit, (v) the joint income of the claimant and his or her partner exceeded the limit, (vi) the claimant was working less than 16 hours a week and (vii) for other reasons; and (2) how many people are currently getting the disability working allowance; and if he

will break this total down by *(a)* average age, *(b)* sex, *(c)* marital status, *(d)* average hourly earnings, *(e)* average hours worked, *(f)* householder status and *(g)* qualifying benefit.

In answer to your first question the majority of the information is routinely placed in the Library with the exception of that relating to persons receiving Family Credit (FC) which is detailed below.

	Total of disallowed applications to Disability Working Allowance (DWA)	*Number disallowed because customer receiving Family Credit (FC) expressed as percentage of total*
New claims	21,375	583 (2·7)
Renewals	325	0
Others	938	11 (1·2)

All figures are as at 26 March 1993.

In answer to your second question the information is as follows with the exception of householder status which is not routinely recorded.

- Average age = 37
- Sex (i) Male = 1,557, (ii) Female = 1,150
- Marital Status (i) Couples = 1,048, (ii) Single = 1,659
- Average hourly earnings = £2·84
- Average hours worked = 29
- Qualifying Benefit:
  - Higher Rate Disability Living Allowance (DLA)/ Analogous Benefits = 1,508
  - Lower Rate DLA = 359
  - Invalidity Benefit = 446
  - Severe Disablement Allowance = 146
  - Disability Premium in Income Support = 196
  - Disability Premium in Housing Benefit = 13
  - Disability Premium in Community Charge Benefit = 39
  - All cases = 2,707

All figures are as at 30 April 1993.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many staff have been allocated to the home visiting service; and how many home visits have been made to date by Benefits Agency staff in connection with claims for disability living allowance or attendance allowance received on or after 3 February 1992 by each disability benefit centre and in total;

(2) how many people who claimed disability living allowance or attendance allowance on or after 3 February 1992 had still not heard the outcome of their claim by 1 April.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance and attendance allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Keith Bradley, dated 11 June 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking (i) how many staff have been allocated to the Home Visiting Service; and how many visits have been made to date by Benefits Agency staff in connection with claims for disability living allowance or attendance allowance received on or after 3 February 1992 by each disability benefit centre and in total, and (ii) how many people who claimed disability living allowance or attendance allowance on or after the 3 February had still not heard the outcome of their claim by 1 April.

Firstly, I should explain that the staff on the Customer Service Sections in the Disability Benefit Centres (DBCs) are involved in general duties to help customers, including forms completion work for both benefits. This may involve telephoning the customer to help in completing a claim form or it may involve a visit. Currently there are around 170 staff working on the Customer Service sections in the DBCs. Since February 1992 to date 5,085 home visits have been made to assist in the completion of claim forms. We are unable to provide a breakdown between DLA and AA65+. The breakdown between DBCs is shown in Annex 1.

The number of DLA and AA claims outstanding at 31 March 1993 is shown below. This information also includes special Rules claims. I have also included the number of DLA and AA claims outstanding at 31 May 1993, which you may find helpful.

	31 March	*31 May*
DLA New Claims	32,662	28,050
DLA Top Up Claims	9,615	1,869
AA New Claims	38,725	29,657
Total	[1]81,002	59,576

[1]This figure represents approximately 4 weeks intake of DLA and AA claims

I hope you will find this reply helpful. A copy of this letter will appear in the Official Report. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

DBC	*Number of Visits*
Edinburgh and Glasgow	215
Newcastle	429
Leeds	817
Manchester	144
Bootle	1,375
Birmingham	940
Bristol	165
Cardiff	37
Wembley	344
Sutton	619
Total	5,085

Figures supplied by Edinburgh DBC include visits carried out by Glasgow DBC which was established at the end of January 1993.

Occupational Pensions

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the average value of an occupational pension in 1979 and in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Hague: It is estimated that, at 1989 prices, the average value of occupational pensions was, £37·50 per week in 1979, and £55 per week in 1989, the latest year for which figures are available. The estimates are based on the 1979 and 1989 family expenditure surveys.

Family Credit

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what progress is being made with the review of the provisions governing family credit claims by self-employed persons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The social policy research unit expects to publish its report on the assessment of self-employed earnings for the purpose of family credit claims in the summer.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Population Statistics

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the latest estimates of those aged 17 years and over, plus 63 per cent. of those aged 16 years and over, for each district council area and parliamentary constituency, together in each case with the equivalent year's electoral registration figures, also expressed as a percentage of these population figures.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested, in respect of district council areas, is set out in the table. Final mid-year population estimates for 1991 and 1992 will be available in the autumn. Mid-year population estimates provide information only to district council level. It is not possible to provide corresponding information at parliamentary constituency level.

District Council area	*Column 1 Estimated population aged 17 and over plus 63 per cent. of 16 year olds*[1]	*Column 2 Registered electors*[2]	*Column 2 as a percentage of Column 1*
Antrim	33,559	30,227	90·1
Ards	49,489	49,089	99·2
Armagh	37,242	36,222	97·3
Ballymena	42,833	42,091	98·3
Ballymoney	17,897	17,610	98·4
Banbridge	24,910	24,891	99·9
Belfast	218,276	209,126	95·8
Carrickfergus	25,131	24,527	97·6
Castlereagh	45,241	47,505	105·0
Coleraine	38,757	37,138	95·8
Cookstown	21,628	21,637	100·0
Craigavon	55,330	54,520	98·5
Derry	66,013	63,309	95·9
Down	42,460	40,656	95·8
Dungannon	31,986	32,354	101·2
Fermanagh	39,121	39,112	99·9
Larne	22,769	22,318	98·0
Limavedy	20,903	19,282	92·2
Lisburn	73,949	69,472	93·4
Magherafelt	25,477	25,611	100·5
Moyle	10,822	10,509	97·1
Newry and Mourne	58,212	58,207	99·9
Newtownabbey	56,638	55,155	97·4
North Down	56,257	54,464	96·8
Omagh	32,330	30,973	95·5
Strabane	25,044	25,319	101·1
TOTAL	1,172,374	1,141,324	97·4

[1] Derived from provisional 1991 mid-year estimates.
[2] 1992-93 Register, qualifying date 15 September 1991.

Rural Schools

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will refer to the Department of Education in Northern Ireland and to education and library boards the research review, "Small Rural Primary Schools", which was commissioned by the Rural Development Council; and if the Department of Education, Northern Ireland will be making a formal and considered response.

Mr. Ancram: Copies of the report have been received by the Department and by the education and library boards. The Department is examining the report and will take it into account as part of its wider review of the pattern of school provision.

School Pupils

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many pupils are at each of *(a)* the primary and *(b)* the secondary schools in the constituency of Newry and Armagh in (i) the maintained, (ii) the controlled and (iii) the integrated sectors of education in respect of the year 1992-93;

(2) how many pupils are at each of *(a)* the primary and *(b)* the secondary schools in the constituency of Strangford in (i) the maintained, (ii) the controlled and (iii) the integrated sectors of education in respect of the year 1992-93.

Mr. Ancram: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to my letter to him dated 4 June 1993 which contains the latest information available on schools enrolments in these two constituencies.

School Meals

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing the number and proportion of children receiving school meals broken down into *(a)* paid and *(b)* free in (i) primary schools, (ii) secondary schools and (iii) special schools in each year since 1987-88.

Mr. Ancram: The information is set out in the table.

School meals service
Northern Ireland
Number of pupils receiving school meals in the primary, secondary and special sector

Year	Primary (including nursery)				Secondary (including grammar)				Special			
	Pupils present	Pupils taking meals	Paid pupil meals	Free pupil meals	Pupils present	Pupils taking meals	Paid pupil meals	Free pupil meals	Pupils present	Pupils taking meals	Paid pupil meals	Free pupil meals
1987-88	176,578	89,048	29,894	59,154	137,480	67,691	31,900	35,791	3,375	3,241	0	3,241
1988-89	178,409	78,525	35,311	43,214	136,918	65,220	39,379	25,841	3,286	3,253	0	3,253
1989-90	179,853	81,768	37,007	44,761	135,163	64,253	39,009	25,244	3,400	3,385	0	3,385
1990-91	178,999	88,690	41,388	47,302	132,525	66,271	41,034	25,237	3,568	3,518	0	3,518
1991-92	178,786	89,815	41,156	48,659	133,847	68,080	39,824	28,256	3,709	3,680	0	3,680

School meals service
Northern Ireland
Proportion of pupils receiving school meals in the primary, secondary and special sector

Year	Primary (including nursery)				Secondary (including grammar)				Special			
	Pupils present	Pupils taking meals	Paid pupil meals	Free pupil meals	Pupils present	Pupils taking meals	Paid pupil meals	Free pupil meals	Pupils present	Pupils taking meals	Paid pupil meals	Free pupil meals
	Number	[1]Per cent.	[2]Per cent.	[2]Per cent.	Number	[1]Per cent.	[2]Per cent.	[2]Per cent.	Number	[1]Per cent.	[2]Per cent.	[2]Per cent.
1987-88	176,578	50	34	66	137,480	49	47	53	3,375	96	0	100
1988-89	178,409	44	45	55	136,918	48	60	40	3,286	99	0	100
1989-90	179,853	45	45	55	135,163	48	61	39	3,400	100	0	100
1990-91	178,999	50	47	53	132,525	50	62	38	3,568	99	0	100
1991-92	178,786	50	46	54	133,847	51	58	42	3,709	99	0	100

[1] Proportion taking meals.
[2] Percentage of pupils taking meals.

Northern Ireland Electricity

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will give global figures for the cost of the flotation of Northern Ireland Electricity; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how much the Department of Economic Development spent on privatising Northern Ireland Electricity.

Mr. Atkins: The cost of the flotation of Northern Ireland Electricity will be reported to Parliament in the usual way once the sale is complete.

ENVIRONMENT

Social Housing

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will establish a working group to investigate the potential for channelling further private finance into social housing projects and the monitoring of such investment.

Mr. Baldry: Making use of private finance is an important element in our housing programmes. Our objective has been to increase the proportion of private funding in order to obtain the maximum benefit from the public resources available. For example, housing associations, which are the main providers of new social housing, are required to raise part of their development funds from the private rented sector. Around £2·5 million in private finance has been raised by housing associations since 1988; and it is hoped that a further £3 billion will be raised over the four years from 1992-93.

In addition, some £1·5 billion of private finance has been raised as a result of the large scale transfer of local authority properties to housing associations. This finance is being used to improve existing stock, to repay debt, and to develop new social housing. Other programmes, such as estate action, housing action trusts and city challenge, aim to foster public and private co-operation in the regeneration of urban areas.

We continue to encourage investment in the rented sector and to consider how to maximise the use of private sector funding and expertise in meeting housing need.

City Challenge

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he has given to enabling winners of city challenge to spend their allocated total budget over five years according to need and the progress of schemes rather than in five equal annual amounts.

Mr. Baldry: City challenge expenditure is subject to the annuality rules applied to all funds voted by Parliament under the Appropriation Act.

The Department makes every effort to manage city challenge resources flexibly to accommodate the difficulties that may be faced by partnerships in matching progress on the ground exactly to their annual £7·5 million funding allocations. Reserve programmes are approved annually in order to accommodate slippage. Underspends which emerge in the year are offset wherever possible by expediting programmes in other city challenge areas. We are considering whether further flexibility is possible.

Ordnance Survey

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list by location the Ordnance Survey triangulation pillars that are still waiting to be adopted;

(2) what criteria he has laid down before organisations and members of the public can adopt Ordnance Survey

triangulation pillars; how they go about adopting them; what is the cost of adoption per pillar; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Responsibility for this subject has been delegated to the executive agency. I have asked Professor Rhind, chief executive for Ordnance Survey, to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Professor David Rhind to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 9 June 1993:

I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Questions about the Ordnance Survey scheme for adopting triangulation (trig) pillars.

The criteria we have adopted, providing the landowner's agreement can be obtained, are:

the first person or organisation to lodge an application for the adoption of a particular pillar will be permitted to do so, subject to various conditions (see below);

the applicant must agree to the terms of a Code of Practice drawn up for the purpose (copy enclosed);

the applicant must sign a memorandum of agreement with both Ordnance Survey and the landowner (copy enclosed).

Anyone wishing to adopt a particular trig pillar simply has to write to Ordnance Survey registering an interest. Ordnance Survey will respond enclosing a copy of "Guide to Adopting a Trig Pillar" (copy enclosed) and, on receipt of the applicant's confirmation of a wish to proceed, will initiate action to obtain the landowner's agreement, leading to the signing of the memorandum of agreement. Although Ordnance Survey incurs some administration cost, the process is free to the applicant.

When I wrote to you on 27 October 1992 the scheme had only recently been introduced. It is proving to be quite time-consuming to make the necessary arrangements with both landowners and applicants and, at the time of writing, no adoptions have been completed. However, we have made 1,983 provisional allocations (out of a total of 4,904 available) and expect to finalise many of these in the next few weeks. There remain available some 2,920 pillars but this number is reducing slowly on a day-by-day basis. A list of those pillars still available will therefore be a very long one and I should be grateful if you would confirm that you would like a complete listing before I arrange for its preparation.

Sellafield Discharges

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from Nordic Environment Ministers regarding proposals to increase permitted discharge levels from the Sellafield nuclear plant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: I have received representations on this matter from the Swedish Environment Minister, in his capacity of the chairman of the Nordic Council of Ministers, and the Danish Environment Minister.

THORP

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has regarding representations made to the Paris Commission on the proposed operation of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: I have received information on a number of such representations.

Sizewell B

Mr. Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he is making for ministerial decisions relating to Sizewell B power station.

Mr. Gummer: Sizewell B is in my constituency, and I have accordingly delegated responsibility for all ministerial decisions to my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Planning.

MINIS 14 Documents

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish his Department's MINIS 14 documents.

Mr. Gummer: I am today publishing MINIS 14 and a set has been placed in the Library.

Small Cetaceans

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what specific steps his Department has taken, or intends to take, to conserve and manage the habitat of small cetaceans, in line with the United Kingdom's commitments under the annex to the 1992 agreement on the conservation of small cetaceans of the Baltic and North seas; and what steps he is taking to prevent acoustic disturbance.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* The Government strongly support the agreement. The United Kingdom was one of the first countries to sign it last year and although the agreement is not yet in force, we have already agreed to apply its principles in all British waters.

Cetaceans already receive considerable protection in British waters under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. A number of other initiatives are also under way which contribute to the conservation of small cetaceans. These include controls of discharges into the sea; restrictions on exploration activity at sea; research into ways of enhancing the acoustic detectability of fishing nets to reduce by-catches, and research funded by my Department for recording cetaceans stranded on the British coast and investigating causes of death.

The new agreement contains provisions to encourage joint research. In considering whether further conservation measures are necessary it is essential that we learn more about the abundance and distribution of the various species of small cetaceans present in European waters. For that reason, the Government announced last year that we would provide £110,000 towards a major survey of small cetaceans in the North sea, including the channel. The project is led by the sea mammal research unit—SMRU—based in Cambridge. The EC and several other range states are also providing resources and the survey is due to be conducted next year.

The SMRU is also to chair a working group on acoustic disturbance to small cetaceans. This has been established by my Department under the arrangements for the implementation of the new agreement.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the United Kingdom Government expect to ratify the agreement on the small cetaceans of the Baltic and North seas signed in New York on 17 March 1992.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 11 June 1993]:* The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is currently preparing an instrument of ratification for the agreement and will be depositing it with the United Nations shortly.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Service

Mr. Davidson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will make a statement on the practice of declaring staff in the counselling service surplus to requirements; what plans there are to make the policy uniform throughout the United Kingdom; what is the long-term situation for those staff who have been declared surplus; and what effect this will have on the career structure within the Employment Service;

(2) if he will make a statement on the prospect of redundancies occurring within the Employment Service within the next 12 months;

(3) whether the present treatment of surplus staff in the Glasgow and Tayside and Fife region is a national pilot project;

(4) what plans he has for the enhancement of early retirement within the Employment Service.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. B. Price to Mr. Ian Davidson, dated 11 June 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, it is the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the Agency's Chief Executive to answer Parliamentary Questions about relevant operational matters. In his absence, I am replying to your questions to the Secretary of State about:

- surplus personnel in the Employment Service;
- what plans exist for redundancies;
- whether the present treatment of staff in Glasgow and Tayside and Fife is a national pilot and
- what plans there are for enhancements to early retirement.

Certain aspects of advisory work in the Employment Service are being regraded resulting in a temporary surplus of staff at Executive Officer grade. In common with current policy operated by the Department of Employment every effort will be made to redeploy these and any other staff. This may include offering people throughout the organisation the opportunity to apply for voluntary early retirement on enhanced terms. In the meantime, dependent upon local circumstances, some may be asked to do the work of more junior grades on a temporary basis. The deployment of these people is likely to have the effect of slowing down promotion opportunities in some places. There are no plans currently for redundancies in the Employment Service.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the *Official Report*. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Mr. Davidson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the proposed effect of the Phillips review on the present surplus situation in the Employment Service.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. B. Price to Mr. Ian Davidson, dated 11 June 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, it is the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the Agency's Chief Executive to answer Parliamentary Questions about relevant operational matters. In his absence, I am replying to your question to the Secretary of State about the effect of Phillip's Review on surpluses within the Employment Service.

The Phillip's review of the Employment Service organisational structure was undertaken to identify ways of sharpening the management of Employment Service performance and further increasing the value for money it achieves in delivering its surpluses, if any, would result from implementing its recommendations.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to Written Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Counselling Service

Mr. Davidson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what assessment he has made of the effect on service to the unemployed of cuts in the grading of the counselling service and changes in the time taken to interview clients;

(2) what proposals he has to enhance the counselling service supplied to the unemployed;

(3) what policy considerations underlay his predecessors decision to regrade the counselling service in the Employment Service and to institute a two-tier service.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

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what assessment she has made of the effect on service to the unemployed of cuts in the grading of the Counselling Service and changes in the time taken to interview clients;

what proposals she has to enhance the Counselling Service supplied to the unemployed and

what policy considerations underlay her decision to regrade the Counselling Service in the Employment Service and to institute a two tier service.

Ever since the Restart programme of advisory interviews was first introduced in 1986 we have continually developed and enhanced the service we offer to our clients. As part of this process of enhancing our advisory services, we took a policy decision that, as from April 1993, the people who provide these services in our local offices should be re-organised into Back To Work Teams. These teams are made up of a mixture of people, at Executive Officer and Administrativeon Officer levels. Adopting this approach means that we are now able to offer clients different levels of interview according to their needs. For some clients basic advice will meet those needs but for the others, where the initial interview uncovers deeper issues or where the client asks for more help, we will be able to offer in depth advisory interviews. In addition we have ensured that all clients will receive a full diagnostic interview at two key points in their period of unemployment; namely six months and one year. Back To Work teams will also help us provide a more coherent service. This is because clients will see a member of the same team at all their advisory and signing visits and we will make sure that these contacts build on one another. Each member of a team will be able to

provide clients with relevant information and advice about their benefit claim and the jobs and programme opportunities available locally.

For these reasons we consider Back To Work teams represent the most cost effective way of providing all our clients with a comprehensive range of advisory services tailored to their needs, while allowing the Employment Service to live within its financial means.

We will be assessing the effectiveness of Back To Work teams throughout the year and will take whatever action to further enhance them as necessary. You may be encouraged to know that early indications from our local office people are that our clients have reacted well to the service they are receiving under the new arrangements.

I hope that this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Mr. Davidson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Employment what assessment he has made of disparities in the policy within the Scottish region on regrading of the counselling service in the Employment Service.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. B. Price to Mr. Ian Davidson, dated 11 June 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, it is the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the Agency's Chief Executive to answer Parliamentary Questions about relevant operational matters. In his absence, I am replying to your question to the Secretary of State about what assessment she has made of disparities in the policy within the Scottish Region on regarding of the Counselling Service in the Employment Service.

Changes to our advisory services in Scotland have been on the same lines as those in England and Wales. Ever since the Restart Programme of advisory interviews was first introduced in 1986 we have continually developed and enhanced the service we offer to our clients. As part of this process of enhancing our advisory services, we took a policy decision that, as from April 1993, the people who provide these services in our local offices should be re-organised into Back To Work Teams. These teams are made up of a mixture of people, at Executive Officer and Administrative Officer levels. Adopting this approach means that we are now able to offer clients different levels of interview according to their needs. For some clients basic advice will meet those needs but for the others, where the initial interview uncovers deeper issues or where the client asks for more help, we will be able to offer in depth advisory interviews. In addition we have ensured that all clients will receive a full diagnostic interview at two key points in their period of unemployment; namely six months and one year. Back To Work teams will also help us provide a more coherent service. This is because clients will see a member of the same team at all their advisory and signing visits and we will make sure that these contacts build on one another. Each member of a team will be able to provide clients with relevant information and advice about their benefit claim and the jobs and programme opportunities available locally.

For these reasons we consider Back To Work teams represent the most cost effective way of providing all our clients with a comprehensive range of advisory services tailored to their needs, while allowing the Employment Service to live within its financial means.

We will be assessing the effectiveness of Back To Work teams throughout the year and will take whatever action to further enhance them as necessary. You may be encouraged to know that early indications from our local office people are that our clients have reacted well to the service they are receiving under the new arrangements.

Regarding the arrangements which have been made in Scotland I should explain that it is an important aspect of our way of working that local managers should have flexibility, within our national framework, to vary their organisation in line with local circumstances. If you have a specific issue about the arrangements in Scotland please contact me or our Director for Scotland, Mr. Alan Brown. His address is Employment Service Regional Office for Scotland, Argyle House, 3 Lady Lawson Street, Edinburgh, EH3 9SD telephone, 031 229 9191.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the cost to date and the expected future cost of his Department's market-testing programme; how many staff are engaged full-time in work relating to market testing; which firms of consultants have been used in connection with the market-testing programme; and how they were selected.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* The Employment Department group's market-testing programme is being developed within existing resources.

It is not possible at this stage to given an estimate of likely savings from the Department's market testing programme. Annual returns across Whitehall indicate, however, that in previous years savings arising from market testing have typically been around 25 per cent. of the original cost even when the activity has remained in-house.

Fifty-one staff are currently employed full time across the group to deliver a programme covering over 1,900 staff and with a value of £72 million.

The Department has used the following consultants to advise on its market testing programme and all were selected as a result of a competitive tender exercise:

Coopers and Lybrand
Ernst and Young
John Pearce
KPMG
PA Consulting
Price Waterhouse

Benefit Week

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to review the benefit week and associated signing arrangements in respect of protection of the interests of those claimants who are alphabetically disadvantaged.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 8 June 1993]:* Responsibility for the subject or the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Sir Cranley Onslow, dated 11 June 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to him about any plans he has to review the benefit week and associated signing arrangements in the interests of clients who may be

disadvantaged by the existing procedures. This is something which falls within the responsibilities he has delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

If a client undertakes part-time work there are occasions when the amount of benefit they are entitled to depends on their signing day and I am assuming this also relates to your question. This is because unemployment benefit is disallowed where earnings for days falling in a benefit week exceed the weekly lower earnings limit, currently £56, and a client's signing day determines their benefit week.

Although the rules concerning part-time work are drawn from Social Security legislation, there are some flexibilities available to us and we are always looking at ways of improving our procedures in order to offer a high quality service to our clients. We have recently carried out a review of our part-time worker procedures and several recommendations have been made to improve the service we provide.

We are working towards introducing nationally the benefit week for regular part-time workers to end on Saturday, when all clients would be affected by the rules in the same way. This has the further advantage that it corresponds with the week used to assess the award of National Insurance contribution credits.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Adminstration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the *Official Report*. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Farmers and Gangmasters

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action the Inland Revenue proposes to take to ensure that farmers and gangmasters comply with their statutory responsibilities.

Mr. Dorrell: The Inland Revenue will continue, where possible, to use its statutory powers to ensure that farmers and gangmasters, who make use of temporary work forces, properly account for both their own and their employees' tax and national insurance liabilities.

Correspondence

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth might receive an answer to his letter of 1 April referring to Mr. P. R. Lake of Rugby.

Sir John Cope: I have recently written to my hon. Friend on this subject.

Shares Dividends

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he proposes to take to prevent tax avoidance arising by the offering of dividends of shares in lieu of cash with instant sale facilities.

Mr. Dorrell: All developments which may have a significant effect on Exchequer receipts are carefully monitored.

Lloyd's

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the timetable for the repayment of tax to individual taxpayers arising out of losses at Lloyd's of London.

Mr. Dorrell: The Inland Revenue calculates that some 27,000 underwriting members of Lloyd's have suffered trading losses for the Lloyd's account year to 31 December 1989. These losses can be used for relief against other income for tax year 1989-90 and, in some circumstances, the previous year and repayment of tax paid on that income may be reclaimed.

The process of dealing with repayment claims for Lloyd's account 1989 started some four months earlier than for previous years, and out of some 26,500 claims received by 28 May, when the last count was made, more than 17,000—64 per cent.—have been repaid. At the same time last year, the comparative figures were 16,800 claims received, 6,900—41 per cent.—had been dealt with.

An interim payment will, if possible, be made in circumstances where Inland Revenue audit procedures may prevent immediate repayment in full.

Income Tax

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the number of people over the age of 65 years who are liable for income tax at each of the lower basic and higher rates, in the present financial year.

Mr. Dorrell: Latest estimates for 1993-94 are as follows:

Thousands

Marginal rate of taxpayer	*Taxpayers aged 65 and over*
Lower rate	1,390
Basic rate	1,490
Higher rate	120
All taxpayers	3,000

Tax Credits

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of tax credits on share dividends becoming available to tax-exempt entities in each of the years 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93 were claimed in the same year.

Mr. Dorrell: I regret that the information requested is not available. However, it is estimated that about 75 per cent. of total repayments of income tax and payments of tax credits to tax exempt institutions are made in the year in which the recipient first becomes entitled to the repayment or payment.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 10 May, *Official Report*, column 327, on what basis he has made the assumption that about half of tax credits on share dividends held by charities are claimed in the same year in which the dividend is paid.

Mr. Dorrell: The assumption is based on the knowledge that many claims by charities for payment of tax credits are made after the end of the financial year in which the dividend is paid. For example, many charities submit an annual claim for income tax repayments and payments of tax credits after the end of the relevant financial year.

Tax Fraud

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has of the extent of fraud in the taxation system; and what steps he is proposing to take to combat it.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 10 June 1993]:* Reliable estimates of the extent of tax fraud are not available. But the hon. Member may wish to consult the chapter entitled "Deterring And Tackling Non-Compliance" in the latest annual report of the Board of Inland Revenue.

Economic and Finance Council

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the latest meeting of the European Community's Economic and Finance Council.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Economic and Finance Council of the European Community—ECOFIN—met in Luxembourg on 7 June. The Paymaster General and I represented the United Kingdom.

The Commission informed the Council of its intention to publish revised economic projections for the Community on 16 June. These are likely to indicate less favourable growth prospects for most member states than the forecast contained in the annual economic report for 1993. By contrast, the revised forecast is expected to contain improved growth prospects for the United Kingdom and confirm the Commission's assessment earlier in the year that GDP growth in the United Kingdom will be greater than in any other major member state. There was a brief preparatory discussion for the Copenhagen European Council's examination of the economic situation in the Community.

The Council discussed the draft seventh VAT directive intended to provide a harmonised system for taxing second-hand goods and works of art. I indicated that the United Kingdom could consider a very low rate of VAT for imported works of art for the duration of the transitional VAT system, but only as part of an acceptable compromise on other outstanding aspects of the proposal. It was agreed that this issue would be considered further by officials before returning to the Council.

In discussion of the Commission's proposals for a carbon/energy tax, I made it clear that the Government had already announced measures in the Budget that would reduce carbon dioxide emissions in the United Kingdom; and that we did not see a need for a harmonised tax at Community level. The topic was remitted for further consideration by officials.

The Commission urged early progress on the proposed directive to abolish withholding taxes on cross-border interest and royalty payments between companies. There was no substantive discussion of this proposal.

The Council adopted conclusions on the Commission's annual report on fraud against the Community budget. I welcomed the Commission's recent efforts to address this problem and stressed the need for clear and measurable objectives and target dates in the Commission's action plan. The Council invited the Commission to provide an assessment of further specific improvements needed to increase the effectiveness of the fight against fraud. The presidency also reported on recent discussions with the European Parliament on a new inter-institutional agreement on budget discipline.

The Council reached a political agreement on the principle of Euratom loans for nuclear safety in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Final adoption of the Council decision will take place once the European Parliament's opinion is available.

Finally, there was a brief general discussion of the Commission's proposed directive for deposit protection arrangements for credit institutions. There was broad support for the principle of a minimum directive in this area, although I stressed the importance of the principle of subsidiarity in this context.

The Council took no formal votes. The conclusions on the Commission's annual report on fraud and the political agreement on the principle of Euratom loans were approved by consensus.

Exchange Rate Mechanism

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his timetable for re-entry to the exchange rate mechanism.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 10 June 1993]:* The Government have no timetable for re-entry to the ERM.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list details of *(a)* orchestral concerts, *(b)* rock concerts, *(c)* opera, *(d)* theatre, *(e)* films, *(f)* ballet and *(g)* other dance performances he attended in his official capacity, since his appointment.

Mr. Brooke: I attended:

(a) a concert by the Guildhall Chamber Orchestra at St. James's, Piccadilly (14 October)
a memorial concert for Sir Andrzej Panufnik at the Queen Elizabeth Hall (18 October)
a concert in honour of Sir Georg Solti at Buckingham Palace (22 October)
a concert for the Scandinavian Festival of the Arts at the Barbican (10 November)
the reopening of the Wigmore Hall (12 November)
a Schools Prom at the Royal Albert Hall (23 November)
the Soiree d'Or at the Royal College of Music (11 December)
a concert by the London Philharmonic at the Royal Festival Hall (26 January)
a concert for Australia Gala day at the Royal Opera House (31 January)
a concert for the "Festival of Britten" at the Barbican (16 March)
a concert at the Wigmore Hall (2 April)

(c) The Duenna, performed by Opera North at the Grand Theatre, Leeds (2 October)
Turandot, at the Royal Opera House (20 February)
L'Assedio di Calais, at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama (3 March)

(d) Three Birds Alighting on a Field, at the Royal Court (6 November)
Carousel, at the Royal National Theatre (8 December)
Hamlet, at the Barbican (18 December)
Poor Beast in the Rain, at the Gate Theatre (22 December)

(e) Chaplin (16 December)

(f) Mayerling, at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden (13 November)
the Bolshoi ballet at the Royal Albert Hall (9 January)

(g) A Royal Gala for the Chicken Shed Theatre Company (14 December).

Parliamentary business precluded my attendance at a number of events to which I had planned to go: for instance, on 4 March, a concert of the Halle orchestra; on

25 March, a concert of the Philharmonia orchestra; "Arcadia", at the Royal National Theatre on 15 April; and "Tristan and Isolde", on 19 April, at the Royal Opera House.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the occasions he has visited the royal palaces in his official capacity since his appointment.

Mr. Brooke: I attended a concert in honour of Sir Georg Solti's birthday at Buckingham palace on 22 October; a dinner for editors of regional newspapers at the Tower of London on 15 December; and opened the medieval palace at the Tower of London on 30 March. I have held several receptions at the Banqueting House on behalf of the business sponsorship incentive scheme and attended one given there by the GB Sports Council.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the visits he has made in his official capacity, since his appointment, to schools or colleges in connection with instruction and training in *(a)* drama, *(b)* dance, *(c)* music, *(d)* art and design, *(e)* architecture, *(f)* athletics and *(g)* other sports.

Mr. Brooke: I visited the Architecture Foundation on 8 December; the Royal College of Music on 11 December and the Guildhall school of music and drama on 3 March. I opened an exhibition on the art of the design process at the Royal Institute of British Architects on 17 March. Invitations to most institutions in this area are more likely to go to Ministers in the Department for Education.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) if he will list details of minority sports events that he has attended in his official capacity since his appointment;

(2) if he will list details of *(a)* equestrian, *(b)* association football, *(c)* rugby league, *(d)* rugby union, *(e)* athletics; *(f)* swimming, *(g)* tennis, *(h)* golf, *(i)* cricket, *(j)* basketball, *(k)* rowing and *(l)* other water sports events he has attended in his official capacity, since his appointment.

Mr. Brooke: I attended:

(a) the Badminton Horse Trials on 9 May
(b) England versus Turkey on 18 November
Bolton Wanderers versus Leyton Orient on 6 March
the FA Cup Final on 15 May
(c) the World Cup Final on 24 October
(d) England versus South Africa on 14 November,
Barbarians versus Australia on 28 November
(h) the amateur golf championships at Royal Portrush on 28 May

I also attended the ice hockey championships final at the Wembley arena on 25 April and the European hockey club championships at Havant on 31 May. On 6 March, my Parliamentary Private Secretary attended a fencing championship on my behalf. I look forward to attending events in others of the categories listed as opportunities arise.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when, in his official capacity, he last went to a soccer match held between clubs at a senior level of the game in leagues in the pyramid below those of the Football League.

Mr. Brooke: None.

Sports Governing Bodies

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he last met the governing bodies of *(a)* association football, *(b)* rugby league, *(c)* rugby union, *(d)* cricket, *(e)* athletics and *(f)* swimming.

Mr. Brooke: I met representatives of the Football Association on 15 December. I have met informally representatives of others of the bodies listed and will meet them formally as the need arises. I have met representatives of the GB Sports Council on several occasions.

Official Dinners

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list details of the official dinners he has attended since his appointment.

Mr. Brooke: I have attended the following official lunches and dinners:

a lunch for those working on the built heritage at Admiralty House (16 November);
a lunch for women in sport at Admiralty House (14 December);
a lunch in honour of the President of Israel and Mrs. Herzog at 10 Downing Street (26 February);
a state banquet in honour of the Portuguese President at Buckingham Palace (27 April);
a dinner in honour of Mr. and Mrs. Brian Mulroney at 10 Downing Street (11 May); and
a lunch for the Irish Minister of State for Arts and Culture at Admiralty House (14 May).

St. Frideswide's Mission

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will reconsider his decision to refuse the granting of listed status to St. Frideswide's mission, Follett street, within the borough of Tower Hamlets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: No. St. Frideswide's mission was assessed for listing last year, and I accepted English Heritage's recommendation, made following detailed research, that the mission buildings do not possess sufficient architectural or historic interest to merit listing.

DEFENCE

Rapid Reaction Corps

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the training in peacekeeping roles undertaken by the rapid reaction corps.

Mr. Hanley: In accordance with the developing NATO peacekeeping concept and as part of their annual training programme, the headquarters staff of the Allied Command Europe rapid reaction corps undertook a period of peacekeeping training earlier this year. United Kingdom units assigned to the corps which have deployed or may deploy to the former republic of Yugoslavia have also carried out peacekeeping training.

Depleted Uranium Ammunition

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the use by British armed forces of depleted uranium ammunition.

Mr. Hanley: The British armed forces are currently equipped with two kinds of ammunition containing depleted uranium: 120mm tank ammunition, small quantities of which were fired by Challenger tanks during the Gulf conflict; and 20mm ammunition for the Royal Navy's Vulcan Phalanx point defence weapons system, which, apart from some rounds fired for proving purposes, was not used in the Gulf. During peacetime training at sea, the Royal Navy also fires Vulcan Phalanx ammunition at towed air targets; DU ammunition is not used by the Army for peacetime training purposes.

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment has been made by his Department of the health risks posed to members of the armed forces who served in the Gulf war, arising from the use of depleted uranium tank and artillery rounds.

Mr. Hanley: The Ministry of Defence knows of no evidence that there was any health risk to any United Kingdom service personnel who served in the Gulf war, due to the handling or use of depleted uranium ammunition.

Medical Discharges

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of the armed forces who served in the Gulf war have since been discharged from the services on health grounds; what were the medical grounds for their discharge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Those members of the armed forces who received a medical discharge as a result of injuries or illness directly attributable to events occurring in the Gulf war are as follows:

	Number
Traumatic amputation of arm	1
Traumatic amputation of hand	1
Fracture of heel bone	1
Injury to kidney	1
Head injury with deafness	1
Open wound of foot	1
Fracture of spinal cord	1
Fracture of limbs	1
Displacement of vertebral disc	1
Disorder of back	1
Atopic dermatitis	1
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder	8
Total	19

Note: Figures are as at 10 June 1993.

Royal Fleet Auxiliaries Orangeleaf and Argus

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to announce the award of the contract to refit RFA Orangeleaf and Argus.

Mr. Aitken: We expect to let contracts for the refits of RFA Orangeleaf and RFA Argus at around the end of this month.

Iraq (No-fly Zones)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has received of recent breaches of the no-fly zones over Iraq by *(a)* Iraq and *(b)* Iran; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: There have been no recent indications of any breaches of either no-fly zone by Iraqi aircraft. We are aware of media reports on alleged recent incursions by Iranian aircraft but are unable to confirm them.

TRADE

EC Structural Funds

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress is being made in submitting projects for funding through EC structural funds.

Mr. Sainsbury: Of the structural funds grant totals allocated to the United Kingdom for the current period, from 1989 to 1993 approximately 80 per cent. have been committed to projects. The remaining 20 per cent. are to be committed before the end of the year.

Electricity

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of *(a)* households and *(b)* the population has electricity supply.

Mr. Eggar: Only isolated areas, containing a very small proportion of United Kingdom households and population, are without electricity supply. My Department has no precise estimates.

Auditors (Remuneration)

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he has any plans to amend the statutory requirements on disclosure of auditors' remuneration.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My Department has today issued a consultative document seeking views on a proposed technical amendment to the Companies Act 1985 (Disclosure of Remuneration for Non-Audit Work) Regulations 1991.

The regulations seek to foster the independence and integrity of audit firms by requiring their client companies to disclose in their annual accounts any remuneration paid to the firm or its associates for non-audit services. The proposed amendment would offer clear deregulatory benefits to both the client company and the audit firm without detracting from the purpose of the regulations.

As many audit firms provide other services such as consultancy or tax advice, in some cases through separate but connected organisations, the definition of associate was made sufficiently wide to include all such entities. However, audit firms with insolvency practices can find themselves with numerous associates, as presently defined, because they are entitled to control 20 per cent. or more of a company's voting rights solely by virtue of an insolvency appointment.

Any receipt of remuneration by such companies is unlikely to be relevant to the independence and integrity of the audit firm. Moreover, it can be an onerous task both for the audit firm to compile a list of such associates and for the client company to check whether payment has been made to any of them for non-audit services. The proposed amendment aims to correct this situation. For similar reasons, the consultative document also seeks views on whether trustees, or certain types of trustee, should also be excluded from the definition.

A copy of the consultative document has been placed in the Library of the House. Comments should reach my Department by 30 July.

Regional Development Grants

Mr. Wareing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when a decision of the European Council can be expected on the proposal to grant Merseyside objective 1 status; what is his position on this matter; what discussions he has had with his European counterparts on the subject; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 27 May 1993]:* I do not expect a decision on the list of objective 1 regions for some time. The Foreign Affairs Council, which my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs attended, discussed the issue briefly and inconclusively on 8 June. The Government will continue to press their demand for objective 1 status for Merseyside.

HEALTH

Ultrasound Scanning

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information her Department has on the cost-effectiveness of antenatal ultrasound scanning; and on what research evidence it is based.

Mr. Sackville: It is widely accepted among clinicians that antenatal ultrasound scanning is a valuable diagnostic facility. Studies undertaken on the cost effectiveness of ultrasound are reviewed in the publication "Effective Care in Pregnancy and Childbirth". The national perinatal and epidemiology unit is currently considering further work in this area.

Specialty Reviews

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the specialty reviews will be published; if she will publish them in full; and what plans she has for public and professional scrutiny of the specialty review findings.

Dr. Mawhinney: The specialty reviews will be published, in full, later this month and will therefore be available for public scrutiny. They are independent advice to Ministers and the national health service, not policy and will form only one part of a complex jigsaw informing decisions about the pattern of hospital services in London. Where appropriate, there will, of course, be full public consultation about any proposals to close or move services.

Hospital Beds

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of NHS beds per 10,000 resident population by status category, in all acute specialties, in *(a)* London district health authorities, *(b)* London special health authorities and *(c)* non-London comparators, dividing the figures into areas categorised as (i) inner deprived, (ii) urban, (iii) high status and (iv) total.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

"Making London Better"

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the reduction of beds suggested in "Making London Better" applies to inner London; and if she will give details of the proposed reductions by specialty and geographical area.

Dr. Mawhinney: "Making London Better" sets out the framework for delivering strategic change to improve London health services. Detailed proposals for change are being developed at local level.

Purchasing Authorities

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the name and address of each purchasing authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested will be placed in the Library.

Prostate Cancer

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what NHS screening facilities are available for men most at risk from prostate cancer.

Mr. Sackville: None. Several research projects in this area are currently being undertaken locally.

Health Authorities

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* regional health authorities, *(b)* health authorities, *(c)* family health service authorities and *(d)* health trusts were in existence on 1 April; and what is her forecast of the number which will exist on 1 April 1994.

Dr. Mawhinney: The figures requested for 1 April 1993 are shown in the table:

(a) 14 regional health authorities
(b) 145 district health authorities
(c) 90 family health service authorities
(d) 392 National Health Service trusts

We are not prepared to make any forecast for 1 April 1994.

Patients (Personal Habits)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which statutory provisions confer on treatment providers authority to discriminate between patients on the grounds of their personal habits.

Mr. Sackville: The patients charter makes it clear that every citizen has the right to health care on the basis of clinical need.

Nursing (Grading)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the forms CGS2 as supplied by each regional health authority to her Department in 1988.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is available in the Library.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the categories of material currently requested from regional health authorities and district health authorities, and which is held at her Department.

Mr. Sackville: The Department obtains from health authorities information necessary for the compilation of the following publications:

Statistical Bulletins (all annual and relating to England only unless otherwise stated)

FHS related

1. Statistics for general medical practitioners in England and Wales.
2. Prescriptions dispensed in the Family Health Services.
3. General Pharmaceutical Services.
4. Ophthalmic Services (occasional).

HCHS related

5. NHS Hospital Activity Statistics.
6. Elective admissions and patients waiting (six-monthly).
7. Bulletin on smoking.
8. HCHS medical staff.
9. HCHS non-medical staff.

Other

10. In-patients formally detained in hospital under the mental health act 1983 and other legislation.

Other publications (England only and annual except where otherwise stated)

Hospital activity and facilities

11. Health Service indicators (issued on computer disk).
12. Summary of bed availability.
13. NHS operating theatres: availability and use.
14. Out patient and ward attenders.
15. Ordinary admissions, day case admissions and regular day and night admissions.
16. Private hospitals, homes and clinics registered under section 23 of the Registered Homes Act 1984.
17. Section 17(2) of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act, 1970.

Community activity

18. Immunisation programmes.
19. Cervical cytology screening
20. Maternity services-midwife clinics and domiciliary visits.
21. Health visitor activity.
22. District nurses activity.
23. Community psychiatric nurses activity.
24. Community mental handicap nurses activity.
25. Other community nurses activity.
26. Genito-urinary medicine clinics, new cases seen (quarterly).
27. Breast cancer screening.
28. Chiropody services.
29. Clinical psychology services.
30. Dietetic services.
31. Occupational therapy services.
32. Physiotherapy services.
33. Speech therapy services.
34. Family planning clinic services.
35. Patient transport services.

Other

36. Public health common data set, data definitions and user guide for computer files.
37. Public health common data set 'Health of the Nation' baseline data and trends, data definitions and user guides for computer files.
38. Public health common data set national volumes.
39. Public health common data set regional volumes.
40. National health service day care facilities.
41. In-patients formally detained in hospitals under the Mental Health Act 1983 and other legislation regional figures.
42. Electro convulsive therapy (ECT).
43. Data from the Addicts index.
44. National health service workforce in England.

Formal publications

45. Health and Personal Social Services statistics.
46. Departmental annual review.

Other statutory publications

47. Annual statement under section 17(2) of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970: Separation of younger patients from older patients in hospitals. (December).
48. Report under section 11 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 on the development of services for people with learning disabilities (mental handicap) or mental illness in England.

In addition, the Department from time to time obtains a disparate range of unvalidated administrative and management data obtained from a number of sources, including health authorities.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Sunday Trading

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to publish his proposals on Sunday trading.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We intend to publish a draft Bill well before the summer recess.

Working Holidaymakers' Scheme

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the numbers and nationalities of individuals from the Commonwealth entering the United Kingdom on the working holidaymakers' scheme for each year since 1990; and the first quarter of 1993; and what plans he has to alter the scheme.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Reliable figures on admissions of working holidaymakers are available only from May 1990 and are given in the table. The operation of the scheme is under review, but there are no plans to abolish it.

Admissions of working holidaymakers at United Kingdom ports

Number of persons

Nationality	*1990, May to December*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993, January to March*[1]
Australia	11,600	14,200	15,400	3,540
Canada	1,800	1,750	1,750	230
Jamaica	50	30	70	[2]
Malaysia	30	40	30	[2]
New Zealand	6,440	7,260	6,500	1,290
Zimbabwe	160	190	170	50
Other Commonwealth	120	120	130	50
Total	20,100	23,600	24,000	5,160

[1] Data are provisional.
[2] Five or fewer.

Juvenile Offenders (Identification)

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the present statutory restrictions on the identification of alleged juvenile offenders who are unlawfully at large.

Mr. Michael Howard: I cannot comment on any current cases, which are sub judice. As a matter of general policy, the Government take the view that it should be possible, consistent with the need to ensure a fair trial, to identify a juvenile who, having been charged with a serious criminal offence, is unlawfully at large. To the extent that the current law prevents this, we intend to change it, and I shall announce further details in due course.

Animal Diseases Orders

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to repeal the provisions of the Diseases of Animals (Therapeutic Substances) Order 1952 and the Foot and Mouth Disease (Sera and Glandular Products) Order 1939.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Legislation will come into force on Monday 14 June 1993 to repeal these orders, partly to comply with new Community legislation on veterinary vaccines and partly for deregulatory reasons.

PRIME MINISTER

Kashmir

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he has made to the Indian Prime Minister about recent activity by Indian Government forces in Kashmir; and if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards self-determination for the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Prime Minister: I discussed the Indian Government's policy on Kashmir, including the actions of the Indian security forces, with the Indian Prime Minister during my visit to India in January. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and I both discussed Kashmir and human rights issues with the Indian Vice-President during his visit to Britain in May. In our discussions with the Indian Government, we have emphasised that the establishment of a political process in Kashmir, which will enable the people of Jammu and Kashmir to express their views, is an important element in the overall solution of the problem.

Local Government Reform

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Prime Minister if he will give the number of representations he or the Secretary of State for Scotland have received calling for *(a)* the establishment of joint boards to take over functions from Scottish directly elected local authorities and *(b)* the transfer of functions from local authorities to the Scottish Office.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave her on 30 April 1993 at column *502*.

Exchange Rate Mechanism

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the conditions required to be fulfilled for the United Kingdom to re-enter the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 8 June 1993]:* I have nothing further to add to the remarks I made on 9 June 1993, at column 302.

SCOTLAND

Divinity Students

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the total number of divinity graduates from Scottish universities in each of the past 10 years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The numbers are set out in the table.

Year	*Number of Divinity Graduates*
1982-83	117
1983-84	122
1984-85	116
1985-86	130
1986-87	113
1987-88	139
1988-89	124
1989-90	118
1990-91	108
1991-92	151

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the total amount of money paid by the Scottish Office in university fees for divinity students in each of the past 10 years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table.

Academic year	*Value of tuition fees* £
1983-84	100,800
1984-85	107,000
1985-86	108,160
1986-87	113,704
1987-88	110,088
1988-89	104,618
1989-90	158,009
1990-91	457,275
1991-92	546,700
1992-93	628,845

Notes:
1. The value has been calculated from the number of Scottish domiciled award-holding students on undergraduate divinity and theology courses at Scottish Universities in the year in question.
2. The significant increase in value from 1990-91 onwards reflects the shift in the balance between Funding Council grant and tuition fee income first introduced in that year.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to alter the payment of fees for

divinity students at Scottish universities; and if he will make a statement on the Scottish Office's policy to the payment of fees for such students.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Tuition fees for eligible divinity students at Scottish universities are normally paid in termly instalments, in common with the tuition fees of eligible students on other courses; divinity courses attract fees at the band 1 rate. The awards offered to divinity students who satisfy the criteria for assistance under the students' allowance scheme include the payment of tuition fees. My right hon. Friend has no plans to change these arrangements.

Kvaerner Govan

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total amount of assistance given to Kvaerner Govan by the Scottish Development Agency and Scottish Enterprise.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 25 May 1993]:* Neither the Scottish Development Agency nor Scottish Enterprise has provided any assistance to the company. The relevant local enterprise company, Glasgow Development Agency, has, however, provided business growth training assistance to the value of around £35,000, funded by Scottish Enterprise; and assistance with skills training of key staff threatened with redundancy, amounting to £102,165, funded from its operating surpluses.

Damp Housing

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what discussions he has had on the medical damage and risk to the health of children living in housing which suffers from dampness or condensation;

(2) if he will hold discussions with the health boards on preventive action to reduce the risk to children of living in damp housing.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* This issue has been raised in the regular meetings my hon. Friend the Minister for education and housing has with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities about housing matters, and in the frequent meetings he has with local authorities about resources for investment in housing. For example, my hon. Friend met representatives of Dumbarton district council and the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) on 3 February to discuss damp housing in Dumbarton. The chief medical officer at the Scottish Office has also discussed the matter with the convention and with Scottish Homes as part of the work being undertaken to take forward the initiatives in "Scotland's Health: A Challenge To Us All". The medical implications of dampness and condensation were described in the chief medical officer's speech to the convention's annual conference on 26 March. The text of the speech has been sent to directors of public health in health boards.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance he offers to health authorities with regard to the risk to children living in housing affected by dampness and condensation.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* The medical implications of dampness and condensation in housing were described in the chief medical officer's speech to the annual conference of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on 26 March. The text of the speech has been sent to directors of public health in health boards.

Gourock Ropeworks

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what plans he has to delist the Gourock ropeworks in Port Glasgow; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he last received a report from *(a)* Historic Scotland and *(b)* Renfrewshire Enterprise Company on the current condition of the Gourock ropeworks, Port Glasgow; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 8 June 1993]:* The Secretary of State has no plans to delist the Gourock ropeworks, Port Glasgow. The building is undoubtedly of listable quality and it remains listed at category A.

Historic Scotland is in regular communication with Inverclyde district council about the ropeworks building and is informed of the council's actions to safeguard the condition of the building and the general security of the site. The council acted last year, in the interests of public safety, to make the building secure against intruders and to carry out works elsewhere on the site and generally tidy up the appearance of the site. Only recently, I believe, has the owner complied with the council's requirement and erected a security fence along the Bay street frontage, following the earlier site clearance works.

Renfrewshire Enterprise Company has, I understand, been involved in consideration of the condition of the building and its development potential in the light of a specific declared interest by a possible developer. That has not, however, been pressed by the developer concerned. The local enterprise company has made no report to the Secretary of State on the ropeworks building.

Historic Scotland will be having a further meeting with the council shortly, and will report on the latest developments to my right hon. Friend.

Dounreay (Safety Inspection)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make a statement on the visit made to Dounreay by safety inspectors from Euratom in May;

(2) what information he has received from Euratom following the visit of the European Commission's safety inspectors to the Dounreay nuclear waste disposal pits in May.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 9 June 1993]:* In terms of article 35 of the Euratom treaty, the European Commission has a right to verify the facilities for environmental monitoring maintained by member states. As part of the Commission's verification programme, a team of inspectors visited the United Kingdom during the period 10 to 14 May to examine monitoring facilities in the north of Scotland including those maintained as part of the surveillance of the environmental effects of operations at Dounreay. The visit did not include any inspection of the facilities for on-site solid waste disposal. The team's report to the Commission will be passed to my right hon. Friend in due course.

Forestry

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury of 20 April, *Official Report*, column 89, *when he expects the Forestry Review Group to make its proposals; and when these proposals will be made public.*

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 10 June 1993]:* I have nothing to add to the replies I gave to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 20 April 1993, *Official Report*, column *89*.

Cervical Smear Tests

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 24 May, *Official Report*, columns *451-52*, about the programme of reviewing cervical smear slides from Inverclyde royal infirmary, Greenock, what recent information he has concerning the tracing of women who have moved from the hospital's catchment area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 10 June 1993]:* The women requiring to be traced fall into two categories:

1. Those who are known, through the Community Health Index, to have moved out of the area.
2. Those whose recorded address on the Community Health Index suggest that they still live in the area, but whose letters sent to those addresses have been returned by the postal authorities as "gone away" or "not known".

The Argyll and Clyde health board is receiving prompt assistance from primary care departments, family health services authorities and from individual general practitioners. Considerable help in tracing women married to United States naval personnel continues to be given by the United States naval authorities. Similar assistance is also being given in relation to Her Majesty's forces wives by the British military authorities.

Where the re-examination exercise has resulted in a "non-negative report", the most strenuous efforts are being made to contact each woman involved to ensure that the necessary follow-up action can be taken.

TRANSPORT

Air Pollution

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what surveys have been conducted into the links between air quality, road traffic and pollution.

Mr. Key: Air quality is monitored across a range of sites and the Department of the Environment issues daily bulletins which provide information on ozone, sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide.

A calculation of emissions of carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, volatile organic compounds, lead and black smoke from road transport is published annually in "Transport Statistics Great Britain".

Details of emissions from the transport sector and Government action to limit them can be found in the memorandum submited to the Royal Commission on environmental pollution by the Departments of the Environment and of Transport. A copy of this memorandum has been placed in the Library.

The quality of urban air review group—QUARG—a group of independent experts, published a report on urban air quality in January 1993 which examines the effect of road traffic on air pollution and future trends. A copy of this report has been placed in the Library.

Bus Deregulation

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the effects of bus deregulation outside London in respect of passenger journeys travelled and of changes in fares.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Lady to my Department's memorandum to the Transport Select Committee on London bus deregulation, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

Elderly Holidaymakers

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been his response to the representations from Saga Holdiays concerning the maintenance of discounted fares for elderly holidaymakers following British Rail privatisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I wrote to the chairman of the Saga group on 12 March. We announced on 25 May our intention to place a statutory duty on the franchising director to ensure that all franchise agreements contain obligations to participate in discount schemes for senior citizens.

Lower Thames Crossing

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made regarding the lower Thames crossing study; and when a report will be published.

Mr. Key: Consultants were appointed in May 1992 for a two-year study of the need for, and feasibility of, a lower Thames crossing downstream of Dartford. They are making good progress and expect to report back to the Department on programme in mid-1994.

Road Congestion

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what criteria he uses to assess quantitatively the extent and seriousness of congestion on individual links in the trunk road network;

(2) what research he has carried out into changes in the level and extent of congestion in the United Kingdom and its economic effects; and what studies he has undertaken of the likely level and extent of congestion on the trunk road network in future years;

(3) what consideration he has given to publishing an annual report on congestion on the road network, similar to the report of the national road maintenance conditions survey;

(4) in what way he monitors the level and extent of congestion on the trunk roads network.

Mr. Key: Congestion is monitored by a variety of means including roadside vehicle detection, video cameras, traffic surveys, and motorway data provided by TrafficMaster—the private sector congestion monitoring system. All road investment involves the appraisal of congestion, including the vehicle delays on individual road links. This is set out in detail in the Department's COBA user manual which is based on extensive research. I have no plans at present to introduce an annual congestion report.

Trans-European Network

Sir Roger Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will include the ports of Sheerness and Ramsgate in the proposals for the European Community's trans-European network maps.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport does not propose, as matters stand, to press for the addition of Sheerness and Ramsgate to the draft trans-European network guideline maps. The contents of the trans-European networks maps are still under consideration, but they would, in any case, be finally for decision by the European Council.

These ports, and many other prominent United Kingdom ports, are not on the principal networks for the modes for which maps are under discussion. The member states group on ports and maritime development has argued against the production of a separate trans-European networks map for ports. Rather, it has proposed the development of a list of port projects which fulfil certain criteria.

Personalised Number Plates

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what statutory provisions apply to the form of displaying vehicle registration numbers; what action is normally taken by police in connection with personalised number plates; to what penalties drivers are subject if they use non-standard displays of numbers and letters on personalised number plates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The statutory provisions for the display of vehicle registration numbers are contained within section II of the Road Vehicles (Licensing and Registration) Regulations 1971. Law enforcement with regard to personalised number plates is a matter for the police. The maximum penalty for the illegal display of a registration number is £1,000.

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many personalised number plate the DVLA has sold to drivers registered in the west midlands since 1986; how many complaints he has received from that region concerning the withdrawal of personalised number plates by DVLA; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency commenced selling registration number in December 1989. Statistics on the number sold to motorists in the west midlands are not available. The Secretary of State has not withdrawn any such numbers and there have been no complaints from the west midlands.

A1–M1 Link

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the A1–M1 link road will be fully open.

Mr. Key: The M1–A1 link road—A14—should be fully open to traffic by the end of 1993.

Flags of Convenience

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals have been made by the European Commission, or any member state, of the European Community concerning the prohibition of vessels registered under flags or conditions of convenience for discharging or loading cargoes at ports in member states.

Mr. Norris: None.

Jubilee Line

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what loans have been made by the European Investment Bank in respect of the Jubilee line; what are the terms of repayment; and on what specific article of the banks the loans have been made.

Mr. Norris: No loan has yet been made. I understand, however, that the EIB is prepared in principle to lend money to the O and Y company, which is currently in administration, to fund the first instalment of the company's intended contribution to the cost of the Jubilee line extension. The terms governing any such loan would be a matter for the parties.

Transport Council

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the result of the Transport Council held in Luxembourg on 7 and 8 June.

Mr. MacGregor: The Transport Council met in Luxembourg on 7 and 8 June. I represented the United Kingdom.

The Council discussed the Commission's communication on a common policy on safe seas. I stressed yet again that sub-standard shipping is a major and urgent problem in terms of the safety of human life and the environment; and that concerted action by all member states against sub-standard shipping both safeguarded EC interests and allowed us together to press for worldwide improvement through a tough new regime for all ships calling at Community ports or passing through Community waters. The Council, following discussions, welcomed and agreed the communication. This is a major step forward towards firm Community action, and the Commission will now bring forward proposals swiftly.

Following the International Maritime Organisation's failure to agree action on higher standards for ferry safety, I informed the Council that the United Kingdom would pursue higher standards unilaterally. I said this was in line with the EC policy on safe seas and that the most recent accident in the North sea showed the importance of action in this field.

The Council met the European Parliament under the conciliation procedure and reached agreement on a transport infrastructure programme for 1993-94 with a budget of 325 mecu.

The Council adopted conclusions on the Commission's white paper on the future development of the common transport policy. These conclusions are wide ranging. They stress the importance of completing the single market and ensuring its effective operation and refer to the importance of the priniciple of subsidiarity and the need to avoid distortion of competition through state aids, as well as covering safety, environmental issues, infrastructure development and external relations.

The Council agreed that a working group on aviation external relations should be set up. It considered amendments to the regulation on computerised reservation systems, but referred the issue of the physical

separation of such systems from parent airlines back to COREPER for further discussion. The Commission reported that it would be putting forward its promised revision of the guidelines on aviation state aids. The Commissioner announced that he was setting up an expert committee to study current problems facing the Community's aviation industry. He undertook to produced a draft negotiating mandate by the September Council for opening transport negotiations with Switzerland, together with a study of relations in a wider framework.

The Council reached political agreement on guidelines for Community trans-European networks for combined transport, roads and inland waterways. Following my intervention about difficulties being encountered by a United Kingdom operator, the Commission stated that Community funding would not be allocated to infrastructure projects not open to operators according to Community rules.

The Council discussed road transport taxation and charging and road haulage cabotage, and agreed to hold an additional meeting on Saturday 19 June on these issues.

Traffic Signs (Private Land)

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will extend the provisions for changes in traffic signs to private land.

Mr. Key: Traffic signs legislation applies to signs on or near any roads to which the public has access. There are no plans at present to extend the scope of this legislation.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Guatemala

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about relations with Guatemala.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We have good relations with Guatemala and welcomed the appointment as constitutional President of Ramiro de Leon Carpio, the former human rights procurator, on 5 June.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to press for the suspension from the Council of Europe of any member state found to be violating the United Nations embargo against Serbia and Montenegro.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: At their meeting on 14 May, which was chaired by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Council of Europe Ministers underlined the importance of respecting and implementing the United Nations Security Council resolutions on the former Yugoslavia, including those imposing embargoes.

If proof were available that any member state actively supported violations of United Nations embargoes, that support would be condemned rightly in all international fora. However, the Council of Europe is not one of those organisations directly involved in this matter and any action might be more appropriately considered by those bodies which have such involvement.

I am aware that members of the United Kingdom parliamentary delegation to the Council of Europe have expressed strong views about the violation of international sanctions. It is open to those members to raise these matters in the assembly.

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest estimate of prisoners of war held by *(a)* the Croats, *(b)* Serbs and *(c)* Muslims.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The International Committee of the Red Cross—ICRC—regularly visits 400 prisoners held by the Bosnian Croats, 1,023 held by the Bosnian Serbs and 993 held by the Bosnian Muslims. The ICRC is also visiting those detained during the fighting between Bosnian Croat and Muslim forces in central and southern Bosnia.

Mr. Wareing To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if his Department is in receipt of information from the UNHCR in respect of the reported expulsion by the Croatian HVO forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina of Muslims from Mostar; what contact he has made with President Tudjman about this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are aware of reports that Bosnian Croat HVO forces apparently with support from Croatian Government forces, have expelled Muslims from Mostar, but have seen no specific information on this from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. The European Community is continuing to apply pressure on President Tudjman about his responsibility for the actions of Croat and Bosnian Croat forces in Bosnia.

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are being taken for UNPROFOR to protect the citizens of Medjeda and Ustipraca in Bosnia from Serb shelling.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The co-chairman of the international conference for the former Yugoslavia and UNPROFOR commanders are continuing their efforts to secure Bosnian Serb agreement to allow United Nations monitors and humanitarian relief convoys through to the Gorazde area. This will provide a vital first step towards stabilising the increasingly desperate situation there.

European Construction

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he has taken in response to the final declaration of the interparliamentary conference on the role of national parliaments on European construction, held in Brussels in May 1992, and recommendation 1193 of the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The final declaration of the interparliamentary conference was debated by the Council of Europe's parliamentary assembly last October, but not sent for action to the Committee of Ministers.

The Council of Europe ministerial meeting on 14 May, which was chaired by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, agreed a number of points for discussion at the forthcoming Council of Europe summit which reflect the concerns expressed on the final declaration and include most of those items raised in recommendation 1193.

The Council of Europe will continue to play a major role in the development of democracy in Europe and it is right that the summit, to be held in Vienna on 8 and 9 October, should consider its role and place in relation to other organisations and institutions, in particular the EC and Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe.

Russia

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if his most recent discussions with his Russian counterpart covered relations between the United Kingdom and Russia and the newly independent Baltic states.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has had regular discussions with Mr. Kozyrev. He has outlined on several occasions the British Government's wish for good relations between Russia and the Baltic states. My right hon. Friend is due to meet Mr. Kozyrev again today, 11 June, in Athens at the North Atlantic consultative conference.

Eastern Europe

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his recent visit to Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs visited Romania from 1 to 3 June and Bulgaria from 3 to 4 June. The objectives of his visit were to assess and encourage political and economic reform: to explain British policy on former Yugoslavia and to urge rigorous enforcement of United Nations sanctions. My right hon. Friend saw at first hand the work of the sanctions assistance mission team on the Danube, working with the local customs authorities.

In Romania he had meetings with President Iliescu, Prime Minister Vacaroiu and Foreign Minister Melescanu, the presidents of both chambers of Parliament and opposition leaders. My right hon. Friend addressed a joint session of the Romanian Parliament. In Bulgaria, he had discussions with President Zhelev and Prime Minister Berov, the chairman of the National Assembly and representatives of the main parliamentary parties.

In both countries, my right hon. Friend discussed bilateral relations including in particular parliamentary links and prospects for British investment. Both Bulgaria and Romania are intent on developing their links with the west and sought our support for this. They are also anxious for recognition for the losses which their economies have suffered as a result of United Nations sanctions against Serbia.

Our relations with Bulgaria and Romania are developing quickly and we are able to discuss issues frankly, including such problems as the dismissal of the director general of the Bulgarian news agencies, and parliamentary control of the Romanian security services. My right hon. Friend encouraged both Governments to press on with the reform process and promised our support for them in this difficult challenge.

My right hon. Friend's itinerary did not include Hungary, which he visited from 4 to 7 May. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the oral answer my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) on 12 May, at column 787.

Baltic States

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he regards *(a)* Latvia and *(b)* Estonia as meeting Her Majesty's Government criteria of states practising good government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Latvia and Estonia observe the principles of good government, including respect for human rights and the rule of law. Since regaining independence both states have made welcome and significant progress on political and economic reform and on building democratic institutions. Estonia's accession to the Council of Europe and its signing of the European convention on human rights demonstrates the progress it has made; following Latvia's successful conduct of its elections, we look forward to the earliest possible Latvian accession to the Council of Europe.

European Economic Integration

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response Her Majesty's Government have made to the proposal by Chancellor Kohl for a special Heads of Government summit in the autumn to discuss the next stage of European economic integration.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The idea of a special European summit in the autumn will be discussed at the Copenhagen European Council on 21 and 22 June. We will consider any proposals which are made there.

Macedonia

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his recent visit to Macedonia; and when he expects ambassadors to be exchanged with that country.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs visited Skopje on 4 June, and held talks with President Ghigorov and acting Foreign Minister Crvenkovski. He presented a consignment of medicines and medical equipment worth £400,000, the latest stage in the United Kingdom's £2 million emergency aid programme. My right hon. Friend also met representatives from the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe mission, the EC monitor mission and UNPROFOR. The United Kingdom now has a representative in Skopje, who will make practical arrangements for establishing an office there. The timing of an opening of diplomatic relations has not been decided: this will be influenced by progress in the mediation process between Greece and Macedonia.

Human Rights

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will support the reform of the control mechanism of the European convention on human rights proposed in recommendation 1194 of the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: All member states of the Council of Europe agree that reform of the control mechanism of the European convention on human rights is urgently needed. The Ministers' deputies meeting on 28 May agreed by consensus the mandate for a draft protocol amending the control machinery of the European convention on human rights. The Council of Europe steering committee for human rights will now draft the amending protocol. The United Kingdom will participate fully in the drafting process.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy towards the draft protocol on the rights of minorities to the European Convention on human rights, proposed by the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Council of Europe committee of experts for the protection of minorities has been mandated to study the possibility of formulating European legal standards for the protection of minorities, including the feasibility of a protocol to the European convention on human rights or a free-standing Convention. The parliamentary assembly's recommendation 1201 of 1993 is a useful contribution to the debate and is one of several documents being considered by the committee. The expert committee is to present its findings to the Council of Europe Heads of State summit in October. We await the opinion of the expert committee.

Expedito Ribeiro de Souza

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements Her Majesty's Government are making for diplomatic representation at the trial for murder of trade unionist Expedito Ribeiro de Souza, taking place in Ri Mara, Pará, Brazil, on 30 June.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We plan that a member of the staff of Her Majesty's embassy in Brasilia will attend the trial for the murder of Expedito Ribeiro de Souza.

Serbia

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he is taking to protest at the imprisonment and treatment of Vuk Draskovic, leader of the opposition in Belgrade, and at other infringements of human rights in Serbia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On behalf of the EC and its member states, the presidency delivered a demarch to the Serbian leadership protesting at the violence in Belgrade on 1 June and the arrest and beating of Mr. Draskovic and his wife. This matter was discussed by European Community Foreign Ministers at the General Affairs Council in Luxembourg on 8 June when it was agreed to send a further message expressing concern and asking for immediate release of Mr. and Mrs. Draskovic. Lord Owen also raised the case with President Milosevic during his visit to Belgrade on 9 and 10 June. We continue to monitor closely the human rights situation throughout the former Yugoslavia. The Conference on Security and co-operation in Europe and relevant human rights organisations are also actively involved.

Iraq

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action Her Majesty's Government propose to take at the United Nations Security Council following the contravention of Security Council resolution 598 by Iran when launching air strikes against People's Mojahedin bases in Iraq on 25 May; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) on 7 June, *Official Report*, column *84*.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 14 June 1993

NORTHERN IRELAND

Terrorism

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were the number of *(a)* killings by terrorists, *(b)* terrorist shooting incidents, *(c)* terrorist bombs, including explosions and defusings, and *(d)* persons charged with terrorist offences, in Northern Ireland in each of the years since 1985.

Mr. Mates: The information requested is set out in the table:

Terrorist incidents in Northern Ireland 1986-1992

Year	*Murders believed to have been carried out by Terrorist Organisations*	*Shootings*	*Bombs*[1] *(Explosions/ Defusions)*	*Persons charged with Terrorist Offences*
1986	55	392	254	655
1987	80	674	384	468
1988	84	537	458	439
1989	57	566	420	433
1990	65	559	287	380
1991	87	499	367	397
1992	75	506	371	405

[1] Excludes incendiary devices

Note

If an individual is charged on more than one occasion he/she is added to the statistics each time.

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consideration he is giving to the RUC Chief Constable's request for changes to the law in respect of the need to respond more effectively to terrorism; and when he expects to announce his decision.

Mr. Mates: The Government keep the law against terrorism under constant review to ensure that it remains both effective in fighting terorism and proportionate to that aim.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

R *v.* Style, Donaldson and Attwell

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Attorney-General if he will place in the Library the transcript of R *v.* Style, Donaldson and Attwell.

The Attorney-General: No. Neither my office nor the Crown Prosecution Service has had cause to request the preparation of a transcript.

Mr. Asil Nadir

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the right hon. and hon. Members from whom he has received representations concerning the conduct of the Serious Fraud Office in respect of Mr. Asil Nadir, with the names of the person at whose request those representations were made in each case.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Member to the written answer given to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on 10 June 1993, column *334*. It is not my policy to give details of such representations.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Attorney-General what discussions he has had and with whom, following the flight from the United Kingdom to northern Cyprus of Asil Nadir; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Pursuant to my statutory duty to superintend the work of the director of the Serious Fraud Office, I have discussed the case with several properly interested persons. It is my practice not to give details of such discussions.

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Attorney-General how many representations he has received in the past year from right hon. and hon. Members concerning the Asil Nadir case; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I have in the past year received a representation from two hon. Members about the Polly Peck investigation and prosecution. One hon. Member has raised an issue by means of a parliamentary question.

ENVIRONMENT

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to issue guidance to local authorities on the avoidance of anti-competitive conduct when subjecting work to the requirements of compulsory competitive tendering.

Mr. Baldry: The Government have today issued guidance under section 9 of the Local Government Act 1992, and pursuant to the Local Government (Direct Service Organisations) (Competition) Regulations 1993 (SI No. 848).

CCT has produced many benefits for local taxpayers since its introduction, not only through financial savings but in improved efficiency and better standards of service. These benefits can be gained only through fair competition, and experience over recent years has shown that the statutory framework for CCT needed to be strengthened and clarified to ensure that all parties compete on a level playing field.

Local authorities are in the unusual position of being both client and potential contractor. In letting contracts, they must ensure that they are absolutely even-handed. It is not the Government's intention to discriminate against an authority's in-house work force, or to presume in favour of the private contractor. I believe the guidance strikes the right balance and will ensure that both local authority in-house teams and the private sector can tender effectively. This can only be in the best interests of the local taxpayer.

Local authorities and other bodies have made many helpful and constructive comments during consultation on these provisions, and I am grateful for their contribution.

Canal Restoration

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assistance his Department is giving to canal restoration groups.

Mr. Yeo: Grant may be available under a number of schemes subject to the relevant criteria being met. These include derelict land grant, the environmental action fund, the European regional development fund, the urban programme and city challenge, and through the Countryside Commission.

Rural Development Areas

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to authorise the Rural Development Commission to put out for consultation its proposals for new rural development areas.

Mr. Yeo: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and I are considering the Rural Development Commission's proposals very carefully. The commission should be able to make an announcement shortly.

Local Authority Expenditure

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to limit local authority expenditure in 1994-95; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The experience of 1993-94—with only three authorities capped—is a very encouraging indication of greater realism on the part of local authorities. We hope that in future years local government will continue to play its part in keeping public expenditure under control and that it will not be necessary to cap any authority.

Council Tax

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to continue council tax transitional relief beyond 1995; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: We have said that there will be council tax transitional relief for at least two years in all. No decision has been made about the availability or otherwise of transitional relief for years beyond 1994-95.

Toxic Emissions

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to help reduce acid deposition and sulphur dioxide emissions in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The United Kingdom is playing a full and active role in negotiations for a second sulphur protocol for the abatement of SO2 depositions under the United Nations Commission for Europe convention on long-range transboundary air pollution.

Olympic Games

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the extent of the Government's financial commitments in relation to Manchester's bid to host the Olympic games.

Sir George Young: The Government have made up to £75 million available to support the Manchester Olympic bid and the construction of key facilities in advance of the International Olympic Committee's decision on the nomination. If the bid is successful, the Government will ensure that the necessary facilities are built by a mixture of public and private finances and that the funding necessary to stage and organise the games is provided.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list for *(a)* Liverpool city, *(b)* Rochdale, *(c)* Calderdale, *(d)* Sefton, *(e)* Solihull, *(f)* Walsall, *(g)* Wirral and *(h)* Wolverhampton metropolitan district councils (i) the total population, (ii) the total capital budget for 1993-94 and (iii) the total revenue budget for 1993-94;

(2) if he will list for the London boroughs of Brent, Havering and Lambeth *(a)* the total population, *(b)* the total capital budget for 1993-94 and *(c)* the total revenue budget for 1993-94;

Mr. Baldry: The information is as follows:

	Total population[1]	*Total capital budget 1993-94*[2] *£ million*	*Total revenue budget 1993-94*[3] *£ million*
Liverpool City	474,522	88·552	447·622
Rochdale	205,209	25·904	161·430
Calderdale	194,138	20·206	143·241
Sefton	295,097	20·650	199·304
Solihull	201,388	20·619	123·725
Walsall	263,361	58·757	[4]202·212
Wirral	336,144	30·930	248·457
Wolverhampton	249,138	51·622	206·863
Brent	247,205	27·273	[4]256·354
Havering	231,227	20·846	149·419
Lambeth	249,888	52·734	306·364

[1] Mid-1991 population estimates, as used in 1993-94 Settlement.
[2] Total capital expenditure as reported by authorities on the CER93/94 return.
[3] Unless otherwise stated, net revenue expenditure as reported by authorities on the RA93/94 return.
[4] Net revenue expenditure as reported on the BR return. Figures from the RA93/94 return are not yet available.

Water Companies (Technical Audits)

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the review of the process of technical audit of water companies has been completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: I am pleased to announce that the review of the procedures devised and followed by the drinking water inspectorate for assessing the quality of drinking water supplied by water companies has been completed by Professor P. F. Stott, CBE, FEng, assisted by Dr. R. F. Packham, CChem, FRSC, FIWEM. I have placed a copy of the report in the Library.

Professor Stott describes the standards adopted for drinking water as very demanding. He concludes that, bearing in mind the regulations and the importance to the public of demonstrating that the standards are adhered to, the system and methods devised and developed by the

inspectorate are appropriate and sufficient but not more than sufficient for the purpose of checking the compliance of the water companies.

For the future, Professor Stott believes that there could be change as quality management systems are introduced by water companies. The inspectorate will commence consultation with water companies and others on the changes that should be introduced in the longer term.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fishing Vessels (Decommissioning)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list for each decommissioning scheme for fishing vessels which has operated since 1973 the total amount paid out, the number of owners who received grants and the number of vessels taken out by each, together with the amount given to employees and the proportion of each scheme financed by EC funds.

Mr. Jack: The Fishing Vessels (Financial Assistance) Scheme 1983, which ran until 1986, is the only decommissioning scheme, to have been operated since 1973. The following are details of decommissioning grant paid under that scheme:

Total amount paid out £18,422,622
Number of vessels on which grant was paid 247
EC contribution 50 per cent.

Figures are not available for the amount paid to employees, since this was a matter between the vessel owner and the employee.

Pesticides

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consultations her Department has had with United States agencies about the toxicological data concerning *(a)* the fungicide Benlate and *(b)* other pesticides with the same active agent.

Mr. Soames: The Department maintains regular contact with the United States and other pesticide registration authorities and was aware of the United States position on the fungicide Benlate and other pesticides containing the same active ingredient (benomyl). As part of the United Kingdom's most recent review of benomyl, the independent advisory committee on pesticides examined the latest study produced by the university of California.

Livestock Quotas

Sir David Steel: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will allow free access to livestock quotas for those farmers wishing to convert from arable farming to mixed organic farming.

Mr. Jack: Farmers wishing to convert to organic farming will be able to acquire quota by buying or leasing. We are currently considering whether such farmers should also be eligible to apply for quota from the national reserves, and if so what priority they should have in relation to other applicants.

Comfrey

Mr. Hain: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to prohibit the growing and consumption of comfrey by private individuals; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: I have no plans to prohibit the growing and consumption of comfrey. The Department has produced an information note on comfrey which we have made available widely. A copy is in the Library of the House. The leaflet advises against the use of comfrey as a vegetable and the use of comfrey root in making teas.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she first considered introducing a voluntary code of practice on the sale of comfrey products; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: When I received the advice of the independent committees—the Food Advisory Committee and the Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment—I considered various options. A voluntary withdrawal of the comfrey products of most concern backed up by appropriate labelling was pursued as the course most commensurate with the risks involved.

Turkish Cyprus

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps she is taking to prevent the illegal import of agricultural products from Turkish Cyprus.

Mr. Jack: Agricultural products originating anywhere in the island of Cyprus may be imported into the EC provided that they satisfy any relevant standards imposed by EC law. The treatment of agricultural imports from north Cyprus is the subject of a case pending before the European Court of Justice.

Salmon Advisory Committee (Membership)

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) on what basis the current members of the Salmon Advisory Committee were selected; how many are representative of anglers' associations; how many are representative of commercial interests; and what is the size of the advisory committee;

(2) how many of the individuals not reappointed to the Salmon Advisory Committee earlier in the current year were *(a)* ineligible through age or *(b)* declined an invitation to serve a further term.

Mr. Jack: The Salmon Advisory Committee currently has 10 members plus a chairman. They have been invited to serve because of their knowledge of matters relating to salmon fisheries or the biology of ecology of salmon. All were appointed on a personal basis and not as representatives of particular organisations or interest groups. The committee was reviewed during 1992 particularly with a view to its future work programme. As a result, membership was reduced from 16. Age was not a factor in deciding membership. One former member declined an offer of reappointment for personal reasons.

Flooding

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which areas of England and Wales have been subject to severe flooding since 1979; and what assistance was made available to those communities and individuals who suffered financial loss as a consequence of the flooding.

Mrs. Shephard: My Department and the Welsh Office seek to maintain a general overview of major flooding incidents but do not collect comprehsensive data on incidents. In any case, to the individuals in the affected area any flooding is likely to be regarded as severe.

The Government do not normally provide financial assistance to individuals as it is considered to be the responsibility of householders and business to ensure that they have adequate insurance for their property and contents. However, exceptionally, the Government made a contribution of £150,000 to the North Wales appeal funds in 1990 following flooding in Towyn.

In certain exceptional circumstances, special financial assistance has been provided to local authorities under the "Bellwin" scheme by my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Secretary of State for Wales with each case being considered on its merits. Grant aid is available to operating authorities for new and improved flood defence works from my Department or the Welsh Office. In targeting grant provision, which has increased in recent years, priority is given to flood warning and urban flood and sea defence works.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Government Documents

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what role his Department plays in reviewing requests made by the media or other interested parties for the release of documents produced by, commissioned by, or forwarded to other Government Departments.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Office of Public Service and Science plays a central role in developing and implementing policies of greater openness across Government as a whole. Decisions on the release of particular documents are, however, for the Department concerned.

Science, Engineering and Technology

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to meet the chairman of the Science and Engineering Research Council to discuss his White Paper "A Strategy for Science, Engineering and Technology", Cm 2250.

Mr. Waldegrave: I see Sir Mark Richmond regularly to discuss a range of topics, especially those relevant to the Science and Engineering Research Council. My office is working closely with Sir Mark and his management team over the implementation of the policy decisions on restructuring the research council system, which were announced in the White Paper.

House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what arrangements are to be made to provide hon. Members with information about the amendments proposed to schedule 1 to the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975.

Mr. David Davis: A detailed explanatory note on the revised resolution tabled on Friday 11 June is available from the Vote Office.

European Parliament (Administrators)

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many candidates invited to and attending the seminar organised by the Cabinet Office on 29 April for British candidates for European Parliament open competition PE/60/A for English language administrators were *(a)* women and *(b)* men; what was the regional breakdown of those (i) invited and (ii) attending the seminar; how many such seminars have been held in each of the last five years in the United Kingdom; and where each was held.

Mr. Davis: Invitations to the seminar were issued by the European Parliament on behalf of the Cabinet Office to the 654 Britons who applied for the competition; of these, 299 were women and 355 were men.

One hundred and five candidates accepted the invitation; of these, 50 were women and 47 were men—the other eight did not indicate their gender. These candidates came from the following regions:

Regions	*Number*
London and Southern England	58
Midlands and Northern England	19
Wales and the West Country	14
Northern Ireland	1
Scotland	0
Elsewhere in Europe	13

During the past five years, the Cabinet Office has not held any other seminars for competitions run by the European Parliament, but it has organised seminars for the main competitions run by other EC institutions as follows:

Location	*Year*	*Seminars*
4 in London 1 in Edinburgh	1988	5
London	1989	1
London	1990	2
4 in London 1 in Edinburgh	1991	5
London	1992	3
London	1993	1

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will review the procedures used by the Cabinet Office in arranging seminars for United Kingdom candidates for European Parliament English language administrators to ensure that *(a)* accurate information is provided to candidates and *(b)* all candidates are given an equal opportunity to take part.

Mr. Davis: The content of every seminar and the procedures used to arrange it are reviewed after the seminar has taken place; the results inform the arrangements for the next seminar.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Tobacco Products

Mr. Barry Porter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the sums, expressed in current prices, raised from *(a)* excise and *(b)* VAT on tobacco products in the first quarters of 1992 and 1993.

Sir John Cope: The available information is as follows:

£ million

	Tobacco excise	*VAT on tobacco*
1992 Q1	1,688	360
1993 Q1	1,311	n/a

The VAT is estimated from consumer spending on tobacco. No estimate is yet available for the first quarter of 1993.

Comparisons between the first quarter of 1992 and the first quarter of 1993 are complicated by the removal of pre-Budget restrictions on the clearance of tobacco products for the 1993 Budget. As a result, clearances which might previously have taken place in the period December to February were delayed until March, and duty payment delayed into the second quarter.

Mr. Barry Porter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the most recent Central Statistical Office estimate for United Kingdom consumers' expenditure on tobacco products in the United Kingdom for Q1 1993; and what was the comparable figure for Q1 1992.

Mr. Nelson: Figures for consumers' expenditure on tobacco products for Q1 1993 will be published on 22 June. Figures for earlier quarters are available from the CSO database which can be accessed by the House of Commons Library. The relevant database indentifiers are:
CCDZ—current prices, not seasonally adjusted
CCEN—current prices, seasonally adjusted
CCBP—constant prices, not seasonally adjusted
CCCD—current prices, seasonally adjusted

Customs and Excise

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many Customs and Excise officers were employed in Scotland at the last available date; and what were the comparable figures for the same dates in 1988 and 1983;

(2) how many customs officers at each of the Scottish airports are designated specifically for drugs duties; and how many serve at each airport at any given time;

(3) what measures are being taken to search hold baggage arriving at domestic halls at Scottish airports which have been interlined by passengers transferring from international flights at Heathrow or Gatwick from other destinations.

Sir John Cope: The following numbers of Customs and Excise officers were employed in Scotland over the relevant period:

	Number
30 April 1993	1,666·5
30 April 1988	1,780·5
30 April 1983	2,078·0

The number of officers shown below have an anti-smuggling role at the Scottish airports, but this is not confined exclusively to drug duties. It also covers other aspects of smuggling and other prohibitions and restrictions:

	Number
Edinburgh	11
Glasgow	32
Aberdeen	20

The deployment of anti-smuggling staff at any given time will vary according to the perceived risk of a particular flight. This is part of a strategy which has moved staff away from predictable static controls to a more mobile and flexible approach targeted at areas of highest risk.

The anti-smuggling staff can also be augmented, when necessary, by staff from elsewhere in the executive units who are normally deployed on other duties. In addition, specialist intelligence teams are used in each area.

Following the introduction of the single market on 1 January 1993, revised arrangements under the European Community baggage regulation enable hold baggage consigned from outside the Commmunity to be cleared at the final destination in the EC. Special measures are taken to identify hold baggage interlined by passengers travelling from international flights at Heathrow and Gatwick. These enable full examination of baggage to be made by customs, where necessary, at the final point of destinations.

Customs checks are increasingly based on the indentification of targets through the use of intelligence and risk indicators.

This highly selective and unobtrusive approach is in no way diminished at those locations where examination of baggage takes place in domestic facilities.

Public Finance

Mr. Hain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out *(a)* tax receipts and *(b)* public expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product for each year since 1978.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to tables 2B.1 amd 2B.2 of the 1993 "Financial Statement and Budget Report".

VAT

Ms Quin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration he has given to lowering the VAT rate levied on energy-saving equipment including insulation and draughtproofing; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: My right hon. Friend keeps all taxes under review, but no Chancellor normally proposes changes in rates outside the Budget statement. In the sixth EC VAT directive, the United Kingdom Government agreed in 1977 that no new zero rates would be introduced.

Pensions

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the cost to the Exchequer of providing non-contributory, index-linked pensions to public sector employees; and what plans he has to review such practice.

Mr. Portillo: Of the main public service schemes, only the armed forces pension scheme is non-contributory. The civil service and judicial pension schemes are non-contributory for members' benefits, but members pay contributions for survivors' benefits. The estimated cost to the Exchequer of providing pensions from these schemes in 1992-93 is as follows:

	£ million
Civil Service Pension Scheme	1,949
Armed Forces Pension Scheme	1,659
Judicial Pensions Scheme	9

The determination of pay for the civil service, armed forces and the judiciary takes into account the value of the whole remuneration package of pay and other conditions of service, including the value of pension scheme benefits and the contribution which scheme members make. These arrangements are kept under review.

Northern Cyprus

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to prevent the flow of capital from the United Kingdom to destinations in northern Cyprus.

Mr. Nelson: None.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to prevent the illegal import of manufactured goods from Turkish Cyprus.

Sir John Cope: Manufactured goods imported from north Cyprus are subject to the normal controls applied by Customs and Excise.

Income Tax

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the total number of guidance documents issued to employers in connection with the levying of income tax; and what was the total expenditure on such documents in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 10 June 1993]:* Each year 130,000 new employers are issued with a starter pack jointly by the Inland Revenue and the Contributions Agency containing basic pay-as-you-earn guidance—tax and national insurance contributions—together with a set of standard tables and a small supply of PAYE stationery, such as deduction working sheets and a requisition form for ordering additional supplies. Around 1·1 million established employers receive an annual pack before the start of each tax year containing revised basic guidance, more detailed guides for reference purposes and further supplies of PAYE stationery tailored to the individual employer's requirements. Soon after the Budget, all employers are sent a supplementary pack containing details of the Chancellor's proposals relating to PAYE including, where appropriate, revised tax tables. Following the move to a unified Budget this November, the contents of the annual and Budget packs will be combined in a single, slimmer pack for all employers.

The Inland Revenue has not kept central records of the total expenditure in each of the last 10 years on providing all employers with the documents they need to operate PAYE. Many of these documents are provided by local tax offices in response to individual requests by employers. However, the Inland Revenue estimate the cost of printing, packing and posting the bulk issue packs at between £4·5 million and £5·5 million in each of the last three years.

Removal Expenses

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will estimate the number of employees for whom removal expenses and benefits exceeded *(a)* £6,000, *(b)* £8,000, *(c)* £10,000, *(d)* £12,000, *(e)* £14,000, *(f)* £16,000, *(g)* £18,000 and *(h)* £20,000 in the latest year for which figures are available;

(2) if he will estimate the yield to the Exchequer of limiting tax relief for removal expenses and benefits to *(a)* £6,000, *(b)* £8,000, *(c)* £10,000, *(d)* £12,000, *(e)* £14,000, *(f)* £16,000, *(g)* £18,000 and *(h)* £20,000 in 1994-95.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 11 June 1993]:* There is no comprehensive statistical data source from which such estimates could be calculated. On the basis of estimates of the total number of employer-assisted relocations from survey and administrative data sources, and reasonable estimates of the likely levels of expenses in 1993-94, the following tentative estimates can be made. These are all based on the Budget proposals for the reform of tax relief for relocation packages with the corresponding limits substituted for the proposed level of £8,000.

Threshold for removal expenses and benefits (excluding loss on sale payments) £	*Numbers subject to tax for 1993-94*[1,2] *(thousands)*	*Income tax yield*[3] *in 1994-95*[4] *£ million*
6,000	100	300
8,000	100	200
10,000	75	150
12,000	50	150
14,000	50	100
16,000	50	100
18,000	50	100
20,000	25	50

[1] Excluding employees covered by transitional arrangements—estimated to be one third of those moving and receiving relocation assistance in 1993-94.
[2] Numbers of employees receiving "loss on sale" payments, additional housing cost payments, or receiving eligible removal expenses and benefits in excess of the stated levels.
[3] Including tax on payments for losses on sale.
[4] In respect of payments in 1993-94.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the number of employees for whom tax relief for removal expenses and benefits were claimed in each year since 1987.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 11 June 1993]:* Available estimates of the numbers of employees whose employers made payments towards removal expenses and who benefited from tax relief under extra statutory concession A5 are as follows:

	Thousands
1987	200
1988	175
1989	200

	Thousands
1990	200
1991	175

These figures are based on information from labour force surveys for United Kingdom moves and Inland Revenue data for international relocations.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the number of employees moving because of *(a)* a job transfer with an existing employer and *(b)* to take up new employment, who benefited from assistance with removal expenses in the latest year for which figures are available; and what was the total tax relief available to employees in each category in that year.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 11 June 1993]:* Approximate estimates in respect of 1991-92, the latest year for which data are available, are given in the table. Estimates of the relevant numbers of employees relocating in the United Kingdom are based on the 1991 labour force survey and those for international moves are based on administrative data. The revenue costs of tax relief—under extra statutory concession A5—are based on reasonable assumptions about the levels of payments and are very tentative.

	Number (thousands)	Cost (£ million)
United Kingdom moves:		
With same employer	120	600
To new employer	40	100
International moves	15	100
Total	175	800

In addition, there were in 1991 nearly 300,000 job-related moves in the United Kingdom which did not benefit from relocation assistance from employers.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Firms (Receivership)

Mr. Alton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the percentage change in the number of firms in the north-west going into receivership in the last month for which figures are available.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: There is no regional breakdown of official statistics on companies placed into receivership. A quarterly breakdown for England and Wales is published in the "Companies Report" presented to Parliament annually by the Department.

International Telephone Charges

Ms Janet Anderson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish details of international telephone charges from the United Kingdom; what information he has on equivalent charges from other EC countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Both BT and Mercury Communications are obliged to make their telephone call charges available. I refer the hon. Member to their published tariffs, which are available from these companies' major offices.

International comparisons are complex, since the basis on which calls are defined can differ from country to country. The following table sets out the price inclusive of VAT in ECUs, of a peak rate, three-minute international telephone call between EC member states.

Outgoing from: / Incoming to:	B	DK	D	GR	E	F	IRL	I	L	NL	P	UK
B	—	2·53	1·93	2·68	2·53	1·93	1·93	2·53	2·31	1·64	2·53	1·93
DK	1·59	—	1·43	1·43	1·80	1·59	1·59	1·80	1·59	1·59	1·80	1·59
D	1·76	1·76	—	1·76	1·76	1·76	1·76	1·76	1·76	1·76	1·76	1·76
GR	1·88	1·88	1·88	—	1·88	1·88	1·88	1·88	1·88	1·88	1·88	1·88
E	3·02	3·02	3·02	3·02	—	3·02	3·02	3·02	3·02	3·02	3·02	3·02
F	1·97	1·97	1·97	1·97	1·97	—	1·97	1·97	1·97	1·97	1·97	1·97
IRL	2·70	2·70	2·70	2·70	2·70	2·70	—	2·70	2·70	2·70	2·70	2·06
I	2·18	2·18	1·94	1·94	2·18	1·94	2·57	—	1·94	2·18	2·57	2·18
L	1·12	1·62	1·62	1·62	1·62	1·62	1·62	1·62	—	1·12	1·62	1·62
NL	1·50	1·50	1·50	1·98	1·98	1·50	1·98	1·98	1·50	—	1·98	1·50
P	2·89	2·89	2·89	2·89	2·72	2·89	2·89	2·89	2·89	2·89	—	2·89
UK (BT)	1·48	1·48	1·48	1·48	1·48	1·48	1·42	1·48	1·48	1·48	1·48	—
UK (Mercury)	1·45	1·45	1·45	1·45	1·45	1·45	1·34	1·45	1·45	1·45	1·45	—

Source: Commission Communications "Towards Cost orientation and the Adjustment of Pricing Structures" updated 1 February 1993.

This table shows that the United Kingdom has the cheapest outgoing call charges to other member states in seven out of 11 cases and is second cheapest in the four other instances.

Vehicle Components

Mr. Spellar: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the levels of import and export of automotive vehicle components for each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Needham: The figures requested are as follows:

Motor vehicle parts
(Standard Industrial Classification 1980 Activity Heading 3530)
£ million

	Exports (FOB)	Imports (CIF)
1992	3,460	4,654
1991	3,365	4,024
1990	3,105	4,077
1989	2,820	3,697
1988	2,476	3,052

Source: HM Customs and Excise.

It is recognised that not all parts used by the motor industry are assigned to the motor vehicle parts industry (Activity Heading 3530) as officially defined. As a result, the trade values assigned to the motor vehicle parts industry are understated.

Oil Companies

Mr. Spellar: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he intends to continue part III of the undertakings given by the oil companies to the Government.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Director General of Fair Trading will be advising my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade on whether any changes should be made to the petrol undertakings. Until that advice has been received and considered, it would be inappropriate to comment further.

Light Rail Transit Systems

Mr. Spellar: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 7 June, *Official Report*, column *161*, on British train manufacture, what progress has been made in his Department's attempts to enhance Britain's capability in light rail transit systems, including trams.

Mr. Sainsbury: Four projects of direct relevance to light rail transit systems, including trams, are currently being considered by my Department under the tracked transport systems technology programme.

Product Marking

Mr. Riddick: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals his Department has to introduce regulations requiring retail products to be named in a manner which indicates the product's area of origin.

Mr. McLoughlin: None. Such regulations would conflict with the United Kingdom's obligations under the treaty of Rome and other international agreements.

Mr. Riddick: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals his Department has to introduce regulations requiring all footwear for sale to be labelled with a symbol relating to the material of construction.

Mr. McLoughlin: My Department has no plans to introduce such regulations. No agreement has been reached on the proposed EC directive and we continue to oppose the obligatory use of symbols to label footwear.

Regional Aid

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will make a statement about the representations he has received about changes in the travel-to-work areas eligible for regional aid;

(2) if he will make a statement about the continued eligibility of travel-to-work areas for regional aid;

(3) if he will make a statement about the changes he intends to make in the travel-to-work areas eligible for regional aid.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave to the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) on 21 April, *Official Report*, columns *117-18* and to the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) on 6 May, *Official Report*, column *206*.

Jobs Stoke-on-Trent

Ms Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give the full cost and remit of the Coopers and Lybrand development study undertaken under contract to English Estates to inquire into the provision of job opportunities in the Stoke-on-Trent area.

Mr. Heseltine: Coopers and Lybrand was asked to provide an overview of the local economy and an analysis of the local property market. The cost of the report was approximately £15,000.

Ms Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who is responsible for co-ordinating measures to counteract the loss of miners' jobs in the Stoke-on-Trent area.

Mr. Heseltine: Lord Walker has overall responsibility for co-ordinating the regeneration package for coal closure areas in England.

North Staffordshire Coalfield

Ms Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to keep all hon. Members representing the north Staffordshire coalfield fully and regularly briefed of all relevant initiatives undertaken by English Estates or by his Department.

Mr. Heseltine: I have asked English Estates to keep hon. Members informed of its activities locally.

Trentham Colliery

Ms Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much new money has been allocated to date to counter the unemployment caused by compulsory redundancies at Trentham colliery; and what percentage that is of the total money allocated to alleviate job losses in coal mining areas.

Mr. Heseltine: Additional money already made available to help regenerate the Trentham colliery area are £7 million from English Estates, £4·9 million from the Department of Employment for the Staffordshire training and enterprise council and £826,000 from the Department of the Environment's coalfield areas fund. This represents over 6 per cent. of the £200 million regeneration package for pit closure areas. Regional enterprise grants have also been extended to the area.

Ms Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which Government Departments, Government agencies and private consultants commissioned from the public sector are currently being consulted or engaged in endeavours to counter the effect of job losses at Trentham.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Department of Trade and Industry, in conjunction with English Estates, the Department of Employment and the Department of the Environment, is working closely with local authorities, the Staffordshire training and enterprise council and other local bodies to counter the effect of job losses at Trentham.

Corporate Jets

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information his Department has received on United Kingdom bids received by British Aerospace for Corporate Jets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: Any information received by my Department on bids received by British Aerospace for Corporate Jets, which has not been announced publicly, is commercially confidential.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will visit the Corporate Jets factory, Broughton, Clwyd; and if he will receive a deputation of production workers from the Corporate Jets factory, Clwyd.

Mr. Heseltine: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry, who has ministerial responsibility for the aerospace industry, visited the Broughton factory site last year. I have no plans to visit the Broughton site or to receive a delegation of production workers from the factory.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information his Department has received on the proposed timetable for the sale by British Aerospace of Corporate Jets to Raytheon (United States); and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: Any information received by the Department of Trade and Industry on the proposed timetable, which has not been announced publicly by the companies involved, is commercially confidential.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement concerning the competition aspects of the proposed sale by British Aerospace of Corporate Jets to Raytheon (United States); and what discussions he has had with the chairman of British Aerospace concerning the competition aspects of the sale.

Mr. Heseltine: The chairman of British Aerospace advised me of the proposed sale on 26 May. However, it is for the Director General of Fair Trading to consider whether the proposed acquisition is a qualifying merger under the Fair Trading Act 1973 and, if so, to advise me in due course.

Indonesia

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations in regard to abuses of human rights were made by the Trade Minister heading the British trade delegation to Indonesia on 1 to 3 June.

Mr. Needham: None. The Indonesians are fully aware of the Government's firm stance on human rights issues, expressed most recently by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary during his visit last April. The purpose of my visit was to promote and further the interests of the accompanying British firms in the civil sector in the buoyant markets of Thailand, Singapore and Indonesia.

Petrol Supply

Sir David Steel: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he intends to accept the Office of Fair Trading"s recommendations on abolition of part III of the undertakings given by the oil companies on the supply of petrol.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has not yet received the Office of Fair Trading's recommendations. Until this advice has been received and considered, it would not be appropriate to comment further.

Bankruptcy Audit Fees

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total sum his Department collected from the 15 per cent. audit fees in bankruptcy for the last financial year.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The total sum collected by the DTI from the 15 per cent. audit fees in bankruptcy for the last financial year was £7,230,351.

Plugs and Sockets

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to ensure that EC proposals for the harmonisation of electrical plug and socket systems do not damage the interests of United Kingdom industry and commerce.

Mr. Sainsbury: My Department is working closely with the relevant trade associations to ensure that the interests of the United Kingdom industry—in particular, manufacturers of domestic appliances, plugs and sockets—are reflected in the harmonisation proposals coming forward, while recognising that consumer safety issues are also important.

Assisted Areas

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 7 June, *Official Report*, columns *164-65*, what are the unemployment statistical series that are being taken into account in determining the new assisted areas map.

Mr. Heseltine: Data on unemployment rates in recent years, including long-term rates, have been considered in the assisted areas map review.

Insolvency Service

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many unclaimed dividends were held in the Insolvency Service's account during the financial year ended 31 March; and what was the total value of these dividends.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The total of unclaimed dividends held in the ISA as at 31 March 1993 was £14,085,952.

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many unclaimed dividends were surrendered to the Consolidated Fund by the Insolvency Service in the year ended 31 March; and what was their total value.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Insolvency Service does not keep a separate record of the number of unclaimed dividends surrendered to the Consolidated Fund in any one year, but their total value for the year ended 31 March 1993 was £530,398.

Post Offices

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what measures he intends to adopt to maintain the network of Crown, agency, or sub-post offices where payments for a full range of pensions and benefits can be made.

Mr. McLoughlin: We are committed to maintaining a nationwide network of post offices at which pensioners and other benefit recipients will continue to be able to receive their benefits. Total government business transacted through post offices has increased in each of the last three years, and is expected to increase again this year. The future prosperity of the network of post offices is one of the key objectives of our review of the structure and organisation of the Post Office, announced by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade on 29 July 1992.

Shipbuilding Directive

Dr. Godman: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he last discussed with his ministerial counterparts from other member states of the European Community the question of the seventh directive on the shipbuilding intervention fund being succeeded by an eighth directive based upon similar criteria to those which underpin the former; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: On 4 May the Industry Council agreed in principle to extend the seventh directive for 12 months after it expires on 31 December 1993.

Political Donations

Mrs. Roche: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the operation of the Companies Act 1985 in relation to the use of associate companies to make political donations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Directors of a GB parent company are required under section 234 and schedule 7 of the Companies Act 1985 to disclose political donations of more than £200 in aggregate made by the company and its subsidiaries.

Subsidiaries, defined in section 736 of the Act, are bodies corporate under the control of a parent. Associate companies are the subject of significant influence, rather than control. The responsibility for the reporting of political donations made by United Kingdom associate companies lies with the associate company concerned.

I have no plans for any review.

KONVER Programme

Mr. Hutton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if his Department will provide matching financial support for projects which succeed in attracting funding under the KONVER programme;

(2) what estimate his Department has made of the employment implications in the United Kingdom of successful bids for support under the KONVER programme; and if he will make a statement;

(3) how many applications for funding under the KONVER programme have been submitted to his Department; and how many are being recommended to the Commission;

(4) what preparations his Department has made to submit applications under the KONVER programme to the European Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: The KONVER scheme of grants was announced on 28 May this year. The United Kingdom along with other member states has been invited to put forward a programme by the European Commission. The Commission has asked for these to be transmitted to Brussels by 31 August 1993.

My Department will shortly be consulting interested bodies for their views on the draft United Kingdom programme. Applications for projects have not yet been invited, and it is not possible at this stage to determine what the employment implications might be.

It will be for applicants themselves to provide funds to match any grant awarded under KONVER.

English Estates

Mr. Trotter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will ensure that an early start is made by English Estates to its Walker development on Tyneside.

Mr. Eggar: English Estates has already let the building contract.

Scottish Beer

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement, following the meeting between the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Consumer Affairs and Small Firms and the Brewers Society, on the issue of the head on Scottish beer.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 9 June 1993]:* At the meeting on 19 May, representatives of the Brewers Society urged the revocation of the order bringing into force section 43 of the Weights and Measures Act 1985. The Government are considering the points made by the society and other representations received on this matter. A decision will be announced as soon as possible.

Baltic States

Mr. Wareing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give a breakdown of import and export trade with *(a)* Latvia and *(b)* Estonia since those countries became independent.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 10 June 1993]:* Figures for trade between the United Kingdom and the Baltic states have been available since January 1992. Exports and imports for Latvia and Estonia are:

£ million

	United Kingdom exports	*United Kingdom imports*
1992		
Estonia	5·6	10·4
Latvia	7·8	25·9
January to April 1993		
Estonia	2·7	8·7
Latvia	2·6	17·2

A detailed breakdown of these figures is published monthly in the Central Statistical Office Business Monitor "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom with countries outside the European Community (Extra-EC Trade)", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Offshore Oil

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list those offshore oil extraction projects that have been subject to an environmental impact assessment under the provisons of article 4(2) of EC directive 85/337.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* No offshore oil extraction projects requiring an environmental impact assessment have been brought forward since 1985.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what criteria and thresholds have been established by his Department to determine which United Kingdom offshore sector oil and gas extraction activities should be subject to an environmental impact assessment under article 4(2) of EC directive 85/337;

(2) which oil and gas extraction activities in the United Kingdom offshore sector are subject to the provisions under article 4(2) of EC directive 85/337.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* For any oil and gas development within 25 miles of the coast or in an environmentally sensitive area, preparation of an environmental impact assessment is a condition of the grant of a licence.

Oil Exploration, Wales

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what money his Department is making available for a comprehensive survey of seabird populations in Cardigan bay, St. George's channel and the Bristol channel before all drilling activity is permitted in these areas.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 10 June 1993]:* The Department of Trade and Industry is a contributing member to the Joint Nature Conservancy Committee's "Seabirds at Sea" survey. Since 1990, phase 4 has investigated the seabird populations from the Irish sea to the Dover straits which includes the Cardigan bay, St. George's channel and Bristol channel areas. The Department's contribution to this phase is £32,000 annually.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans his Department has to carry out or support a survey of background levels of hydrocarbons in Cardigan bay, St. George's channel and the Bristol channel before any oil drilling is permitted.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 10 June 1993]:* The Department has no such plans at present.

Oil and Gas Licences

Dr. Twinn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the results of the 14th off-shore oil and gas licensing round.

Mr. Eggar: I am able to inform the House that I received a total of 97 applications for 128 of the 484 blocks offered in the three stages of the 14th offshore licensing round. These applications involved 62 companies, either as sole applicants or in various consortia. Following careful examination of all applications, I am prepared to offer licences for 110 of the blocks applied for.

This has been the largest round, in terms of the number of blocks on offer, since the 4th round in 1972; and the largest in terms of the number of blocks awarded since the 11th round in 1989. This provides ample evidence of the high level of continuing interest in United Kingdom offshore oil and gas resources.

I have already announced the award of licences for 12 of these blocks, seven in Cardigan bay and five west of the Shetlands; in these cases, an early announcement has enabled the successful applicant to proceed promptly with exploration of potentially major new basins.

The other awards cover acreage in both new and mature areas. It was particularly refreshing to see innovative proposals for further investigation of areas such as the southern North sea, which has already been extensively explored; it is clear that such areas are mature only at particular geological horizons and that further reserves may be identified at levels previously considered unprospective.

In total, 33 of the blocks awarded have not been licensed in the past. There was particularly keen competition for blocks in the English channel, the Solway firth and the North channel which were offered for licensing for the first time. There was also strong interest in areas of St. George's channel and the Peel basin which have been lightly explored in the past.

In making decisions on the round, I have been particularly mindful of the environment. Many of these areas are close to shore and environmentally sensitive, and stringent conditions will be attached to licences to ensure that licensees take due care when exploring these blocks. The industry nominated a further 35 highly sensitive blocks for inclusion in this round but for which satisfactory safeguards could not be agreed, and these blocks were not offered for licensing. A full environmental impact assessment will be required before a licensee may develop any find within 25 miles of the coast or in other sensitive areas further offshore; and the general public will have access to the companies' environmental appraisal reports on request, in line with the EC freedom of access to environmental information directive.

Where companies applied for blocks in environmentally sensitive areas, they were asked to assess the environmental resources in these areas and to identify the steps they planned to take to avoid or minimise environmental impact, should they be awarded the block. The degree of environmental awareness and the quality of environmental presentations provided was taken into account when considering awards in these areas. I am happy to say that most companies demonstrated their awareness of environmental issues and many had carried out high-quality pre-application work. I am taking steps to ensure that companies awarded licences do not lose sight of their environmental commitments. My officials will

require licensees to report on local consultation at a set time;
require licensees to discuss plans for seismic activity and drilling before these activities are carried out;
stipulate that, at the Department's discretion, Government observers may be present at some operations;
require a post-operational return to indicate how licence conditions have been met.

These steps will ensure that the 14th round does more to safeguard the environment than any previous round.

The results of this round show the continuing commitment of the international oil and gas industry to the United Kingdom continental shelf. I am, however, particularly pleased to note the success of a number of British independent companies in the round, both as partners and as operators. The re-evaluation of mature

areas and the opening up of new basins as a result of this round should ensure that the UKCS remains an important oil and gas-producing province well into the next century.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what were the top 10 beneficiaries of United Kingdom overseas aid in each year since 1987.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The top 10 recipients of United Kingdom external assistance for the financial years 1987-88 to 1991-92 are shown in the table.

Top ten recipients of United Kingdom external assistance 1987-88 - 1991-92
(£ thousand)

1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
(1) India	India	India	India	India
(2) Malawi	Kenya	Nigeria	Bangladesh	Bangladesh
(3) Kenya	Bangladesh	Poland	Zambia	Zimbabwe
(4) Tanzania	Malawi	Bangladesh	Kenya	Ghana
(5) Ghana	Mozambique	Kenya	Pakistan	Kenya
(6) Bangladesh	Ghana	Malawi	Tanzania	Pakistan
(7) Uganda	Tanzania	Ghana	Malawi	Zambia
(8) Sri Lanka	Sudan	Pakistan	Jamaica	Indonesia
(9) Pakistan	Pakistan	Uganda	Nigeria	Tanzania
(10) Mozambique	Sri Lanka	Sudan	Zimbabwe	Uganda

Kenya

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list each of the aid projects in Kenya which are at present receiving financial assistance from the United Kingdom Government.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[pursuant to his answer, 8 June, c. 198-99]:* A corrected version of the table showing current capital and technical co-operation projects supported through the United Kingdom bilateral aid programme in Kenya is as follows:

Project	*Total cost of project £'000*
Agriculture and Livestock	
Rehabilitation of South Nyanza Sugar Factory	4,660
Agricultural Information Centre	945
Tea Research Foundation/Natural Resources Institute Collaboration	28
National Agricultural Research Project	7,640
Kenya Trypanosomiasis Research Institute	1,391
Forestry	
Indigenous Forest Conservation	4,860
Conservation	
Protected Areas and Wildlife Services	3,661
National Museum of Kenya Plant Conservation and Propagation Unit	467
Energy	
Geothermal Energy Project	1,295
Department of Mines and Geology	331
Construction	
Technical Co-operation for Ministry of Public Works	183
Roads	
Molo-Litein	12,080
Tea Roads Feasibility Study	416
Silibwet Forest Road Design	198
Highways Sector Field Manager	39
Railways	
Kenya Railways Phase II	9,647
Ports	
Kenya Ports Authority	11,327
Small Scale Enterprise	
Assistance to Youth Polytechnics	157
K-Rep Juhudi Credit	967
Public Administration and Good Government	
Kenya Institute of Administration	1,441
Kenya Institute of Management	580
Office of Controller and Auditor General	243
Assistance to Department of Government Investments and Public Enterprises	82
Machakos Environmental Management Study	20
Education	
Thames Polytechnic/Kenya Polytechnic Link	800
Moi University/Oxford Forestry Institute Link	530
University of Nairobi Microcomputer Project	710
National Programme for Student Communication Skills in Universities	820
Kenyatta University English Department	282
Kenyatta University Science Faculty	1,650
Moi University Library	8,373
Moi Faculty of Information Sciences	911
Strengthening of Primary Education	3,325
Teachers Resource Centres	96
Health and Population	
World Bank Third Population Project	4,601
Moi University Faculty of Health Sciences	185
Isiolo Hospital Immediate Support	549
Senior Health Planner/Economist	180
Family Planning Services	2,000
AMREF Health Care Support Unit	262

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's aid policy to Kenya.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We continue to provide substantial development aid and humanitarian assistance to Kenya. In addition, we are prepared to pledge new fast disbursing balance of payments assistance once the international financial institutions assess that Kenya has made satisfactory progress in implementing the recently agreed IMF-monitored economic reform programme and subject to the political environment being acceptable.

Eastern Bloc (Training)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to publish a progress report on the Chancellor of the Exchequer's financial sector scheme for training and experience in western insurance banking and finance for former eastern bloc country management and civil servants.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Chancellor's financial sector scheme is open to countries of the former Soviet Union and the Baltic states, not eastern Europe. Officials will review progress with the scheme in July. Conclusions will be summarised in the know-how fund's annual report, which will be published in early 1994.

EDUCATION

Standard Assessment Tasks (Class Size)

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the correlation between achievement in standard assessment tasks taken by children at key stage 1 and class size.

Mr. Robin Squire: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Schools gave to the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Gapes) on 17 May at column *23*.

School Meals

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the average price of a school meal in *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools in cash and real terms in each year since 1979.

Mr. Forth: Information is collected on the fixed charges for a standard meal in schools operating a dining centre and on the amount allowed, the "authorised spend", for each pupil receiving a free meal in schools operating a cash cafeteria system.

This information—in both cash and real terms—for each year since January 1990 is shown in the table. Information for earlier years is not readily available.

Average fixed charge or authorised spend on school meals in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in England: January 1990-92 (cash and real terms)

	1990	1991	Pence 1992
Primary (including nursery)			
Cash terms:			
Fixed charge	62	73	83
Authorised spend	63	75	88
At 1992-93 prices:			
Fixed charge	74	81	86
Authorised spend	75	83	91
Secondary			
Cash terms:			
Fixed charge	65	78	89
Authorised spend	74	82	94
At 1992-93 prices:			
Fixed charge	78	86	92
Authorised spend	88	91	97

Note: The cash terms figures have been re-priced into 1992-93 prices using the latest GDP (Market Prices) Deflator Index.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish a table showing the number and proportion of children receiving school meals broken down into *(a)* paid and *(b)* free in (i) primary school, (ii) secondary schools and (iii) special schools in each year since 1987-88.

Mr. Forth: Information on school meal arrangements in each local education authority in January 1992—the latest date for which information is available—is shown in the table. Similar information for January 1989 and subsequent years is published annually in the "Statistics of Education (Schools)" volumes, copies of which are available in the Library. Information for earlier years is not readily available.

Numbers and percentages of day-pupils taking paid and free school meals in maintained schools in England January 1992

Local education authority	Primary (including nursery)				Secondary				Special			
	Paid		Free		Paid		Free		Paid		Free	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
Corporation of London	84	38	91	41	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Camden	3,491	33	3,291	31	2,055	20	1,762	17	73	25	143	48
Greenwich	7,096	33	5,727	27	3,302	24	2,204	16	238	35	250	36
Hackney	4,927	30	6,567	40	1,463	19	2,443	31	135	27	222	44
Hammersmith and Fulham	3,403	36	2,929	31	1,755	29	1,236	21	156	41	145	38
Islington	5,273	36	5,094	34	1,102	14	1,806	23	115	37	131	42
Kensington and Chelsea	2,345	36	1,980	31	1,389	37	741	20	0	0	1	100
Lambeth	6,112	32	6,720	35	1,685	27	1,607	26	219	29	324	43
Lewisham	5,784	28	5,188	26	1,673	16	2,257	21	148	36	154	38
Southwark	5,455	26	7,162	34	1,448	16	2,433	27	101	28	160	45
Tower Hamlets	5,305	26	9,179	45	1,378	13	4,406	40	74	16	269	57
Wandsworth	6,111	36	4,822	28	2,960	31	1,903	20	29	42	202	39
Westminster	3,278	36	2,949	32	1,422	20	1,992	28	43	32	63	47
Barking	4,015	26	2,330	15	1,380	15	665	7	73	45	30	19
Barnet	7,524	31	2,738	11	8,385	45	1,467	8	142	45	56	18
Bexley	5,570	30	2,030	11	3,075	21	714	5	117	43	88	32
Brent	5,805	26	4,574	21	1,449	12	1,789	15	141	40	119	34
Bromley	5,437	27	2,257	11	4,996	31	1,165	7	142	40	65	18
Croydon	7,588	29	4,217	16	5,734	37	1,466	9	219	44	157	31
Ealing	4,978	18	4,830	17	3,202	29	1,831	16	173	38	138	30
Enfield	6,095	27	3,096	14	4,768	28	1,548	9	161	38	137	32
Haringey	4,815	26	4,992	27	2,286	26	2,240	26	93	27	116	34
Harrow	356	2	1,277	7	2,220	27	536	7	84	42	40	20
Havering	4,952	26	1,560	8	3,784	24	724	5	87	39	51	23
Hillingdon	1,552	8	1,436	7	3,142	23	938	7	156	39	86	21
Hounslow	5,604	29	2,942	15	5,565	42	1,600	12	173	44	90	23
Kingston upon Thames	352	3	705	7	1,569	21	340	5	99	43	37	16
Merton	2,986	20	1,982	13	1,784	24	706	10	79	32	64	26
Newham	4,563	18	5,758	23	1,032	8	2,429	18	120	35	130	38

Local education authority	Primary (including nursery): Paid Number	Primary (including nursery): Paid Per cent.	Primary (including nursery): Free Number	Primary (including nursery): Free Per cent.	Secondary: Paid Number	Secondary: Paid Per cent.	Secondary: Free Number	Secondary: Free Per cent.	Special: Paid Number	Special: Paid Per cent.	Special: Free Number	Special: Free Per cent.
Redbridge	6,692	37	1,981	11	4,657	33	1,081	8	204	53	73	19
Richmond upon Thames	2,216	21	824	8	2,026	28	560	8	70	47	30	20
Sutton	3,138	24	1,122	9	3,975	37	552	5	84	34	54	22
Waltham Forest	5,496	28	4,355	22	2,833	23	2,102	17	336	44	214	28
Birmingham	29,766	27	32,673	30	21,990	34	15,042	23	885	32	1,327	48
Coventry	6,774	23	6,863	23	3,545	19	2,600	14	287	38	281	37
Dudley	7,180	26	3,780	14	4,662	26	1,711	10	222	39	183	32
Sandwell	7,199	23	6,727	21	3,080	17	2,329	13	276	36	328	42
Solihull	6,464	34	2,572	13	5,324	37	892	6	107	39	81	29
Walsall	9,939	35	5,823	20	5,627	30	2,786	15	230	42	207	38
Wolverhampton	4,980	20	5,445	22	1,918	12	1,870	12	173	35	187	38
Knowsley	2,455	13	6,867	37	1,836	21	2,544	29	126	22	312	55
Liverpool	9,833	19	15,828	31	4,959	17	6,888	24	374	26	670	46
St. Helens	5,710	32	3,379	19	5,012	41	1,310	11	167	36	169	36
Sefton	5,092	19	4,850	18	5,298	28	2,308	12	166	39	163	38
Wirral	7,140	23	7,391	24	6,363	30	3,849	18	243	31	305	40
Bolton	8,251	30	4,766	17	5,860	34	1,823	11	172	36	166	35
Bury	6,538	39	2,334	14	3,880	37	806	8	95	38	99	40
Manchester	12,286	26	18,506	40	5,245	22	6,154	26	405	23	734	42
Oldham	8,808	37	5,461	23	5,415	34	2,519	16	240	40	201	34
Rochdale	6,894	31	4,915	22	4,134	33	2,049	16	187	39	173	36
Salford	7,348	31	6,748	29	3,351	26	1,686	13	169	37	160	35
Stockport	8,511	33	3,588	14	8,189	45	1,495	8	156	38	118	29
Tameside	8,695	38	4,408	19	4,824	34	1,637	12	160	39	143	35
Trafford	4,063	21	2,942	15	4,656	42	1,186	11	141	35	102	26
Wigan	7,465	25	5,061	17	6,243	30	1,795	9	291	36	318	40
Barnsley	6,878	32	4,197	20	4,368	36	1,442	12	75	47	63	40
Doncaster	14,345	49	6,568	22	6,287	30	2,699	13	280	42	259	38
Rotherham	7,439	30	4,798	19	3,898	22	1,723	10	230	37	245	39
Sheffield	11,147	24	9,924	21	6,918	29	3,278	14	222	31	315	45
Bradford	13,333	33	8,984	22	14,344	32	9,588	21	343	36	310	32
Calderdale	8,409	44	3,528	18	3,659	29	1,403	11	100	50	50	25
Kirklees	13,329	37	6,185	17	8,378	32	2,742	10	260	46	205	36
Leeds	17,582	31	9,398	17	16,014	31	7,099	14	425	42	326	33
Wakefield	13,174	45	4,707	16	6,312	30	2,184	11	236	43	215	39
Gateshead	6,429	35	4,640	26	1,349	12	1,360	12	129	38	141	41
Newcastle upon Tyne	6,211	27	7,605	33	5,436	33	2,716	16	229	32	269	37
North Tyneside	5,850	36	3,017	18	5,345	36	1,526	10	211	48	161	37
South Tyneside	5,306	33	4,584	28	2,645	29	1,376	15	148	43	137	40
Sunderland	9,852	32	7,611	25	3,370	18	2,651	14	216	31	266	38
Isles of Scilly	70	40	8	5	16	17	23	25	—	—	—	—
Avon	20,636	26	12,852	16	15,179	28	4,496	8	640	36	575	32
Bedfordshire	17,237	41	6,053	14	14,398	32	4,629	10	433	41	293	28
Berkshire	15,817	25	5,350	9	16,480	37	2,018	4	663	42	336	21
Buckinghamshire	2,356	4	3,392	6	6,004	17	1,366	4	428	33	322	25
Cambridgeshire	13,552	23	6,768	12	8,637	21	2,907	7	364	40	212	23
Cheshire	21,990	25	11,950	13	23,421	37	5,033	8	578	49	291	25
Cleveland	25,120	39	15,336	24	10,648	27	5,650	14	422	31	548	40
Cornwall	10,654	27	5,846	15	11,331	39	3,058	11	105	44	101	42
Cumbria	13,643	32	5,205	12	13,626	44	2,002	7	122	40	76	25
Derbyshire	45,598	54	11,351	13	35,585	63	4,662	8	556	44	375	30
Devon	17,797	23	11,598	15	22,238	40	4,763	8	573	36	434	28
Dorset	463	1	2,995	7	10,389	27	2,423	6	442	42	243	23
Durham	26,426	45	11,724	20	11,192	30	3,968	11	350	37	402	43
East Sussex	12,699	26	7,282	15	9,251	27	3,071	9	466	36	384	30
Essex	27,727	23	14,808	12	21,427	22	5,890	6	874	35	583	24
Gloucestershire	7,809	19	4,774	11	6,768	21	1,905	6	471	39	351	29
Hampshire	24,561	19	15,169	12	20,504	25	4,579	5	1,110	32	864	25
Hereford and Worcester	4,605	10	3,848	8	10,959	23	2,776	6	503	45	274	24
Hertfordshire	29,653	36	7,643	9	21,183	32	3,744	6	688	42	387	24
Humberside	31,231	37	13,969	17	22,085	38	6,339	11	445	40	382	34
Isle of Wight	1,894	27	1,314	19	3,167	31	1,425	14	79	31	68	27
Kent	32,177	26	15,577	13	28,554	29	6,838	7	993	36	665	24
Lancashire	32,048	25	23,320	18	30,920	37	10,430	13	1,066	35	1,102	36
Leicestershire	22,325	28	10,669	14	19,303	32	4,604	8	465	50	300	32
Lincolnshire	1,355	3	2,812	6	11,686	33	2,104	6	311	33	263	28
Norfolk	15,454	25	7,511	12	9,716	25	2,394	6	335	41	183	23
North Yorkshire	18,652	33	4,944	9	19,643	45	2,012	5	353	44	162	20
Northamptonshire	398	1	4,441	9	4,187	10	3,160	7	378	33	237	21
Northumberland	8,569	40	3,210	15	12,933	45	2,403	8	171	40	119	28
Nottinghamshire	25,810	29	15,939	18	17,321	28	6,981	11	682	42	517	32
Oxfordshire	10,228	25	3,843	9	7,746	23	2,011	6	281	36	155	20
Shropshire	12,536	36	4,924	14	10,779	41	2,088	8	204	38	176	33
Somerset	3,274	9	3,132	9	7,225	26	1,726	6	224	38	161	27

Local education authority	Primary (including nursery)				Secondary				Special			
	Paid		Free		Paid		Free		Paid		Free	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
Staffordshire	33,629	36	13,618	15	16,793	25	4,946	7	897	44	623	31
Suffolk	11,382	27	4,535	11	12,197	26	3,019	6	339	51	128	19
Surrey	27,512	36	5,821	8	14,990	35	1,338	3	709	49	273	19
Warwickshire	10,842	24	4,660	10	7,863	32	1,310	5	343	30	361	31
West Sussex	15,262	30	4,922	10	10,308	26	1,910	5	475	44	205	19
Wiltshire	8,986	20	4,676	10	9,433	29	1,987	6	247	43	145	25
ENGLAND	1,131,050	27	681,167	16	865,313	30	294,297	10	31,435	37	26,504	32

Nursery Education

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what information he has on the numbers and proportion of eligible children who are in *(a)* local authority nursery schools and *(b)* reception classes in primary schools, broken down by social class.

Mr. Robin Squire: Information is not collected centrally on the numbers of pupils in reception classes in primary schools. In January 1992—the latest date for which information is available—the total number of pupils of all ages in maintained nursery schools in England was 52,204. A breakdown of this figure by social class is not available.

Teacher Redundancies

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what estimate he has of the numbers of qualified teachers who have *(a)* taken voluntary redundancy or *(b)* been made compulsorily redundant, in each of the years 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Forth: The table shows the number of teachers aged 50 and over who retired prematurely by reason of redundancy from maintained schools in England and claimed their superannuation benefits during the financial years 1990-91 to 1992-93. Information on other redundancies of teachers is not centrally recorded.

Year to March	Teachers
1991	[1]1,587
1992	[1]1,464
1993	[1]2,028

[1]Teachers prematurely retired by reason of redundancy: maintained schools in England.

Teachers' Conferences

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on his recent visits to the national conferences of teachers' organisations.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend accepted invitations from the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, the Secondary Heads Association and the National Association of Head Teachers to address their annual conferences. Copies of the texts of these addresses have been placed in the Library.

University Funding

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what recent representations and information he has received about funding at the university of Essex; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend has received no such representations. Funding for individual universities is a matter for the Higher Education Funding Council for England.

VAT (Fuel)

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether the level of student grants will be adjusted to reflect the forthcoming value added tax on energy.

Mr. Boswell: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) on 24 March at column *603*. The rates of student support for the academic year 1993-94 were announced last month, and those for 1994-95 will be announced next spring.

School Playing Fields

Mr. Hoon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the consultation letter on the sell-off of school playing fields.

Mr. Forth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) on 13 May 1993 at columns *526-27*.

Undergraduate Courses (Fees)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what representations he has received from university directors regarding the introduction of a system of top-up fees for undergraduate courses; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has received regarding the introduction of a system of top-up fees for undergraduate courses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: Recent press publicity has led to one or two representations from members of the public about the introduction of top-up fees for undergraduate courses. No such representations have been received recently from the heads of universities, although my right hon. Friend is aware of current discussions within the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals, about the future funding of higher education.

English

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many representations he has received on the subject of the proportion of coursework in the assessment of GCSE English; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: During the past year my right hon. Friend received 76 letters about GCSE coursework in English. The 40 per cent. limit for coursework for English is higher than that for most other GCSE subjects, because we recognise that some aspects of achievement in the subject are better assessed through extended tasks than through a terminal examination. However, there must be a limit on coursework assessment if we are to have confidence in the reliability and consistency of GCSE grades.

Access Funds

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the amounts to be allocated to each of the access funds in England for 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: A total of £23·78 million will be available for the access funds for the 1993-94 academic year, which represents a 9·6 per cent. increase over 1992-93. This generous increase will enable colleges and universities to offer access funds to more students who face severe financial difficulties which might prevent them from pursuing their courses. I am sure that all concerned will welcome the extra help this represents.

The total sum is being allocated between the three funds as follows:

£ million

	1993-94	*1992-93*
Undergraduate fund	13·15	11·99
Postgraduate fund	6·03	5·50
Further education fund	4·60	4·20
Total	23·78	21·69

Note: The figures for 1992-93 have been derived from those announced earlier to bring them onto a comparable basis with those for 1993-94, having regard to the new framework for higher and further education established in April 1993.

These funds for 1993-94 will be allocated by the appropriate funding council.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Chile

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what communications Her Majesty's Government have had with Dr. Carlos Cardoen of Chile since 1985 over the procurement of British machine tools for the production of armaments in Chile.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We have no record of communications between Her Majesty's Government and Dr. Carlos Cardoen about such procurement. I also refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the then Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), to the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) on 21 April 1993 at column *107*.

Iran

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Iranian Government concerning its reported violation of Iraqi airspace on Tuesday 25 May in an air attack on bases of the Mujaheddin organisation of Iran.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) on 7 June at column *84*.

Social Charter

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to press for an increase in the membership of the Committee of Independent Experts on the working of the Council of Europe's social charter.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The amending protocol envisages an increase in the membership of the Committee of Independent Experts to "not less than nine". We support such an increase.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on recommendation 1168 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on the revitalisation of the Council of Europe's social charter.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Recommendation 1168 is an important contribution to the current consideration within the Council of Europe of changes to the European social charter.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to press for the revision of voting arrangements under the Council of Europe's social charter so that only representatives of those Governments who subscribe to the charter are able to vote on matters raised under it.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It has now been agreed that, as envisaged by the amending protocol, only those states which have ratified the charter shall vote when the Committee of Ministers is acting as part of the supervisory machinery of the charter.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which countries have subscribed to the Council of Europe's social charter, but have not ratified the amending protocol opened for signature on 21 October 1991; and if he will make it his policy to encourage those who have not ratified the protocol to do so.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The following countries have ratified the social charter, but have not ratified the amending protocol: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Spain, Turkey and the United Kingdom. Decisions on ratification are a matter for individual Governments.

Israel

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Government's policy on the Arab boycott of Israel; and what recent initiatives his Department has taken.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have always condemned the boycott as iniquitous and incompatible with the spirit of the peace process. We continue to seek Arab agreement to end it—we initiated an EC démarche last autumn under our presidency. The response to this démarche, and to numerous bilateral approaches made by the United Kingdom, has been uneven. But we are encouraged by signs that some Arab countries are enforcing the requirements of the boycott less rigorously, and in particular by recent reports that Kuwait will cease to apply the boycott to third countries.

Channel Islands and Isle of Man

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the relationship between the Channel islands and the Isle of Man with the European Community.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The relationship of the Channel islands and the Isle of Man with the European Community is governed by article 227(5)(c) of the treaty of Rome—and the equivalent provisions in the ECSC and Euratom treaties—and by protocol 3 to the Act signed on 15 January 1972 concerning the conditions of United Kingdom accession to the Community. The islands chose in 1972 to remain essentially outside the Community. The broad effects of the treaty provisions is that the islands are included in the Community solely for customs purposes and for certain aspects of the common agricultural policy and free movement of goods. The islands neither contribute to, nor are eligible to benefit from, Community funds.

Northern Cyprus

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to impose restrictions on trade between Britain and the illegal northern Cyprus Government.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The question of imports to the United Kingdom from northern Cyprus is the subject of a case pending before the European Court of Justice.

Bosnia

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received from United Nations authorities in Bosnia-Herzegovina in respect of attacks by Muslim forces on Croat villages and atrocities committed against the Croat population; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have seen reports from the United Nations and the European Community monitor mission on Muslim attacks on Croat communities, particularly around Travnik. It is clear that there have been many casualties. Ethnic cleansing is taking place. We continue to deplore aggression and human rights abuses, whichever party is responsible.

Entry Clearance

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what instructions have been given to entry clearance officers in British consulates in European Community member states to enable them to fulfil their obligations to provide non-Community national spouses of British citizens residing in other member states with entry clearance to allow them to travel to and settle in the United Kingdom in accordance with the requirements of article 3 of Council directive 68/360/EEC.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Following a European Court of Justice ruling in July 1992, instructions were issued to posts about procedures for dealing with entry clearance applications from non-EC spouses of British citizens who wish to return to the United Kingdom with their non-EC spouse, after residing in another member state.

Any such entry clearance applications are currently referred to the Home Office for a decision, pending the issue of further guidance to posts.

European Court of Justice

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on how many occasions since 1983 Her Majesty's Government have been judged by the European Court of Justice to have been in breach of European Community directives; and what that number represents as a percentage of *(a)* cases brought against the United Kingdom and *(b)* cases won by a plaintiff or plaintiffs.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 8 June 1993]:* The United Kingdom was held to be in breach of the relevant directives in six out of 12 direct actions—50 per cent.—brought before the European Court of Justice by the Commission since 1983, in accordance with article 169 of the treaty of Rome, involving allegations that the United Kingdom was in breach of its obligations under EC directives.

Further details of cases brought against the United Kingdom are contained in the six-monthly White Papers on developments in the European Community, which also contain details of references to the European Court of Justice from United Kingdom courts under article 177 of the treaty.

Japan

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he or other Ministers or officials of his Department have had with Japanese counterparts since 1990 regarding *(a)* the application of international safeguards to and *(b)* the implications for non-proliferation of the export of plutonium from the United Kingdom to Japan.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

All plutonium in Japan is subject to full-scope international safeguards. Japan has made clear its commitment to the goal of preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and is a non-nuclear weapons state party to the non-proliferation treaty. Appropriate assurances are obtained from the Japanese Government before any plutonium is exported there from the United Kingdom,

but otherwise Her Majesty's Government have not discussed the matters referred to by the hon. Member with the Japanese authorities.

HEALTH

Mental Health

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her estimate of the number of people with mental health problems in each region.

Mr. Bowis: This information is not available centrally. A national survey assessing the extent of psychiatric morbidity in Great Britain is currently being carried out by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. The survey, the results of which will be available in 1995, will provide information both nationally and regionally on the nature and extent of psychiatric illness amongst adults.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of NHS mentally ill patients in non-NHS hospitals, by region in each of the last five years.

Mr. Bowis: This information is not available centrally.

"Making London Better"

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her estimate of the number of nurses who *(a)* will be deployed and *(b)* will not be able to be redeployed within London health services when hospitals are closed under "Making London Better" plans.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is too early to speculate about the effects of reconfiguring hospital services in London or the number of nurses who will be employed in the capital's hospitals.

Hospital Beds

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many beds there are in inner London and each Thames region; and what are the projected numbers in each of the next five years.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table. Information on projected numbers of beds is not available centrally.

Average daily number of available beds all wards 1991-92

	Number
North West Thames	17,414
North East Thames	18,727
South East Thames	16,442
South West Thames	16,678
of which in inner London[1]	17,397
Special health authorities	2,619

[1] Comprising of district health authorities: Bloomsbury and Islington, Camberwell, City and Hackney, Hampstead, Haringey, Lewisham and North Southwark, Newham, Parkside, Riverside, Tower Hamlets and West Lambeth.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current number of *(a)* acute and *(b)* geriatric beds in each health region.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Average of daily number of acute and geriatric beds in each health region for year 1991-92

Regional Health Authority	Acute	Geriatric	Total
Northern	8,763	3,435	12,198
Yorkshire	9,413	3,575	12,988
Trent	10,280	4,050	14,330
East Anglian	4,742	2,240	6,982
North West Thames	6,946	2,808	9,754
North East Thames	9,259	3,179	12,438
South East Thames	8,503	2,903	11,406
South West Thames	6,113	2,422	8,535
Wessex	6,759	2,765	9,524
Oxford	4,981	1,457	6,438
South Western	8,211	2,925	11,136
West Midlands	11,874	4,434	16,308
Mersey	6,248	1,870	8,118
North Western	11,183	3,916	15,099
Special Health Authorities	1,819	127	1,946
England Total	115,094	42,106	157,200

Londoners' Health

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to create an information base about the health of the London population.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is the role of purchasers to develop an information base about the health of their local population in order to make informed decisions about the delivery of health services. All regional health authorities publish an annual public health report, which draws on information from the public health common data set, commissioned by the Department.

King Edward VII Hospital

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the future of the King Edward VII hospital, Trent region.

Mr. Sackville: The future of the site of the former King Edward VII orthopaedic hospital in Sheffield is a matter for Trent regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact Sir Michael Carlisle, chairman of Trent regional health authority, for details.

West Midlands RHA

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the qualifications of Bryan Baker for the position of chair of the West Midlands regional health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: Bryan Baker has wide experience of handling major business and providing strategic leadership at the highest level, gained during his long and distinguished career with Tarmac plc.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she is requiring the West Midlands regional health authority and Wessex regional health authority to take to recover the payments improperly paid to and accepted by officers of that authority when they resigned or whose employment was terminated; and what action she expects to be taken against those authorising such payments.

Dr. Mawhinney: Health authorities should take legal advice on the case for recovery of such payments and consider whether disciplinary action is appropriate.

Trent RHA

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if a decision has yet been reached over the relocating of the headquarters of Trent regional health authority; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: This is a matter for the Trent regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact Sir Michael Carlisle, chairman of Trent regional health authority, for details.

British Health Care Consortium

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the work of the British Healthcare Consortium in Russia.

Dr. Mawhinney: The British Healthcare Consortium together with associated organisations concerned with construction, procurement, training and consultancy are offering a complete service package to regions in Russia to upgrade their health services. Currently, the main centre of activity is the Sverdlovsk region. Projects include the supply of medical equipment and pharmaceuticals and the construction of a theatre block for a new oncology hospital.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State went to Ekaterinburg in Sverdlovsk during a visit to Russia in April and was much impressed by the work the consortium is doing there.

Health Authorities

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will conduct a survey of how many health authorities and trusts in England have asked their employees to forfeit pay awards in 1993-94.

Dr. Mawhinney: No.

Subfertility

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment she has made of the cost of providing a comprehensive service for the assessment and treatment of subfertility;

(2) what assumptions have been made of the cost of providing assessments and treatments for subfertility in the allocation of resources to health authorities.

Mr. Sackville: The publication "Effective Health Care: The Management of Subfertility" contains estimations of the cost of providing a comprehensive subfertility service. This guidance was issued to health authorities on 28 September 1992, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Allocations to health authorities are made on the basis of the size, age, distribution and relative health of their resident populations. It is for district health authorities to decide their priorities in purchasing services to meet the needs of their resident population.

Prescription Charges

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current prescription charge as a percentage in real terms of the prescription charge in 1979.

Dr. Mawhinney: In real terms, the present prescription charge is 864 per cent. of the charge in 1979. At £4·25 it remains substantially less than the average total cost of a prescribed item to the national health service. Only one in five items dispensed by community pharmacists and appliance contractors now attracts a charge, compared with two in five in 1979.

Cancer Tests

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the reasons why women over the age of 65 years are not called for further routine regular smear tests or mammography examinations.

Mr. Sackville: There is evidence to suggest that women over the age of 65 are less likely to accept invitations to screening. Though such women are not routinely invited, they can on request continue to be screened within agreed intervals.

NHS Overseas Enterprises

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the work of NHS Overseas Enterprises.

Dr. Mawhinney: National Health Services Overseas Enterprises (NHS OE) is the international marketing arm of the national health service (NHS) in England. NHS OE exists to provide overseas clients with a central point of access to the wealth of skill and expertise within the NHS and other organisations offering health related expertise. Current projects include establishing a management training college in Russia; commissioning a private hospital in Turkey; and planning and developing two health care colleges in Saudi Arabia.

Low-income Scheme

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the average cost of processing a claim made under the health benefits low-income scheme; and what plans she has to simplify that scheme;

(2) if she will introduce a provision for claiming optical refunds under the health benefits low-income scheme in line with the rules for claiming a refund of prescription charges and dental treatment;

(3) how many staff were engaged in the administration of the health benefits low-income scheme at Newcastle in *(a)* March 1991, *(b)* March 1992 and *(c)* March 1993;

(4) when she proposes to revise the health benefits low-income scheme claim form AG1.

Dr. Mawhinney: The numbers of staff at the health benefits unit in Newcastle engaged in the administration of the national health service low-income scheme were *(a)* 364·5 (whole-time equivalent (WTE)) in March 1991, *(b)* 363·5 (WTE) in March 1992 and *(c)* 341 (WTE) in March 1993.

The average cost of processing a claim in 1993-94 is estimated to be £6·61. Final decisions on any measures to

simplify the scheme or to improve its effectiveness will be taken as part of the fundamental review of health expenditure. The content of the claim form AG1 will be considered in the light of those decisions.

Negative Growth

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each regional health authority, the number of district health authorities that received negative growth revenue for the financial year *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94.

Mr. Sackville: Revenue allocations to district health authorities are the responsibility of regional health authorities and detailed information is not routinely collected centrally. Details of the main revenue allocations in respect of resident population have been collected in a consistent and comparable format for the first time for 1993-94 but these amounts do not represent the total revenue allocation per district.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Peniston (Mr. Clapham) on 23 February at columns *546-47*, for a list of the 24 districts which received less funding at constant prices for resident population in 1993-94 than in 1992-93.

Schizophrenia

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provisions for emergency beds she is making for victims of schizophrenia.

Mr. Bowis: It is the responsibility of district health authorities to purchase, having regard to available resources, mental health services including emergency provision appropriate to the needs of their local population.

Asthma Deaths

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children in each standard age group died from asthma in each of the past five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: Deaths from asthma (international classification of diseases 493) by standard age group for the past five years are published in the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys series DH2, "Mortality Statistics", table 2.

Data for 1992—not yet published—are shown in the table:

Deaths from asthma (ICD 493) by standard age group, for 1992 in England and Wales.

Age group	*Total*
Under 1	1
1-4	10
5-9	3
10-14	6
15-19	20

GP Contracts (Health Promotion)

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she has decided on payment levels for the new general practitioner contract health promotion and diabetes and asthma management programmes.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have decided that the payment levels for the new programmes which take effect on 1 July should be as follows:

Annual payment for a General Practitioner with average Great Britain list size (adjustments pro rata for other list sizes)

	£
Health Promotion Programmes	
Band 1 (programmes to reduce smoking)	420
Band 2 (programmes for patients at risk from hypertension, or with established coronary heart disease (CHD) or stroke)	1,135
Band 3 (full programme for prevention of CHD and stroke)	2,015
Diabetes and Asthma Programmes	
Annual Payments	
Diabetes Allowance (per GP)	350
Asthma Allowance (per GP)	350

There will also be a transitional protection scheme: final details of this remain under discussion with the General Medical Services Committee of the British Medical Association.

Novopens

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence she has as to the multiple use of novopens by diabetics; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations she has had in favour of the inclusion of novopens for insulin injection on the prescribable list.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have received a number of representations on the matter of novopens and the associated special needles. Their inclusion in the general practitioner prescribable list must, like all new additions to the list, be subject to the availability of resources.

Project 2000

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 7 June, *Official Report*, column *59*, how many Project 2000 nurses were in training in 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Sackville: There were 3,000 Project 2000 nurses in training in September 1990 and 10,500 in September 1991.

NHS Equipment

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on the value of donated equipment *(a)* held by NHS trusts and health authorities at 31 March 1992 and *(b)* acquired by NHS trusts and health authorities over the preceding year.

Mr. Sackville: The summarised accounts of health authorities and of national health service trusts in England for 1991-92 show the total net book values of equipment acquired through donations at 31 March 1992 as £91 million and £28·3 million respectively.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 27 May at column *677* for information on the acquisition of assets from donations.

TRANSPORT

Armed Forces Railcard

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for the continuation of the armed forces railcard after railway privatisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail operates the armed forces railcard for commercial reasons: it helps to encourage use of the railway and fill seats which might otherwise be empty. The new private operators will doubtless market their services vigorously. I am sure that they will offer a range of discounted tickets in addition to the discount schemes that they will be required to provide for senior citizens, disabled people and young people. However, this will be a commercial matter for the new operators.

Jubilee Line Extension

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make an announcement on the construction of the extension of the Jubilee line.

Mr. Norris: Once a satisfactory conclusion has been reached in the negotiations between London Transport and the parties involved with the financing of Canary Wharf on the basis of their contribution to the Jubilee line extension, the Secretary of State will authorise the start of construction.

A27 (Worthing Bypass)

Sir Terence Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements have been made to inform constituents of the right hon. Member for Worthing who have objected to the Government's preferred route for the A27 and prefer a bypass of the arrangements for the public inquiry; what deadline has been set for the proposal of alternatives to the Government route; and what assessment he has made of whether all objectors will receive notice in sufficient time to prepare representations.

Mr. Key: All those who have submitted objections to the published proposals for the A27 Worthing-Lancing improvement scheme have already been notified about the arrangements for the public inquiry starting on 28 September. Those wishing to propose an alternative have been requested to submit details to the Department by 18 June. This will enable a plan of the alternatives to be drawn up by the Department's consultants and for it to be published in sufficient time for the public to prepare their representations on it before the start of the inquiry.

Rail Freight

Ms Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will supply figures for freight tonnage carried by rail for each of the last three years.

Mr. Freeman: This information is given in table 1.9 of "Transport Statistics Great Britain 1992", a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

A27

Sir Terence Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to check whether letters he has sent to the constituents of the right hon. Member for Worthing who objected to the Government's preferred route for the A27 have been delivered; and if he will extend the deadline of 18 June for submissions on alternative routes.

Mr. Key: In accordance with the Department's normal practice, all those who have objected to the published proposals for the A27 Worthing-Lancing improvement scheme were sent details of the forthcoming public inquiry by recorded delivery. Any items not delivered by the Post Office are returned to the Department. To date, four of the 1,098 notifications issued have been returned.

Alternative proposals need to be received by 18 June so that the Department's consultants can prepare a plan of each alternative for discussion with the proposer and publication in sufficient time for the public to consider and comment on it before the start of the inquiry on 28 September.

Sir Terence Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library a map showing the location of the proposed temporary relief road for the A27 referred to in his statement of 20 May, *Official Report*, column 476.

Mr. Key: The location of the temporary highway proposed as part of the scheme for the A27 Worthing-Lancing improvement is shown on the published site plan 2 of the draft A27 Trunk Road (Worthing-Lancing Improvement Side Roads) Order. I am sending a copy of the relevant extract to my right hon. Friend.

Hospital Ships

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will explore the possibility of a feasibility study on hospital ships within the terms of reference of European objective 1 status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have been asked to reply.

Objective 1 funds are not likely to be available for shipbuilding projects.

PRIME MINISTER

Ozone-depleting Substances

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Prime Minister if he will introduce guidelines to all Government Departments to secure that all future purchases made do not involve ozone-depleting substances and that the policy be reflected within specifications given to contractors and suppliers.

The Prime Minister: I understand that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is arranging a meeting of green Ministers to discuss a number of environmental issues, including the treatment of ozone-depleting substances in departmental green housekeeping strategies.

Turkish Cyprus

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Prime Minister what discussion he has had with other European Heads of State on the imposition of appropriate sanctions against the illegal régime in Turkish Cyprus.

The Prime Minister: None. The question of imports to the United Kingdom from northern Cyprus is the subject of a case pending before the European Court of Justice.

Mr. Asil Nadir

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions he has had with the Turkish President regarding the presence of Mr. Asil Nadir in Turkish Cyprus.

The Prime Minister: Her Majesty's ambassador in Ankara has made our desire for the return of Nadir clear to the Turkish Government. The Turkish authorities are co-operating with us in the investigation.

Office Costs

Mr. Hain: To ask the Prime Minister what was the expenditure on the Prime Minister's Office broken down into salaries and other costs for each year since 1980-81 in *(a)* cash and *(b)* 1992-93 prices.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 10 June 1993]:* Salary information for the years prior to 1985-86 is not available separately. The available information is as follows:

	Cash (£ thousands)			*1992-93 prices (£ thousands)*		
	Salaries	*Other costs*	*Total*[1,2]	*Salaries*	*Other costs*	*Total*[1,2]
1980-81	—	—	1,745	—	—	3,528
1981-82	—	—	2,415	—	—	4,452
1982-83	—	—	2,700	—	—	4,647
1983-84	—	—	3,026	—	—	4,978
1984-85	—	—	3,787	—	—	5,929
1985-86	1,403	3,003	4,406	2,083	3,738	5,821
1986-87	1,670	3,293	4,963	2,402	4,736	7,138
1987-88	1,763	3,655	5,418	2,404	4,982	7,386
1988-89	1,904	4,650	6,554	2,420	5,909	8,329
1989-90	2,159	5,510	7,669	2,574	6,570	9,144
1990-91	2,386	5,840	8,226	2,634	6,447	9,081
1991-92	2,628	6,036	8,664	2,720	6,247	8,967
1992-93	2,903	6,962	9,865	2,903	6,962	9,865
1993-94[3]	3,297	7,406	10,703	3,209	7,208	10,417

Notes:

The figures represent the cost of 10 Downing street and Chequers borne on the votes of the Cabinet Office (OPSS) and its predecessors. Over the period, the following changes have occurred to the basis of the costs:

in 1981-82 the Ministry of Defence introduced charges for the use of its aircraft;

in 1983-84 the then Property Services Agency introduced charges for buildings and services;

in 1984-85 charges were introduced for the Government Car Service and the Service personnel at Chequers; and

in 1986-87 the cost of office services was included for the first time and in April 1992 26 office service posts were formally added to the complement of No. 10 Downing street. These staff were already working in No. 10 but were previously on the complement of the Cabinet Office establishments officer.

[2] Costs are shown in the year in which the expenditure was made. Because of billing delays, this is not always in the financial year in which the goods or services were provided.

[3] 1993-94 budget.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Group 4

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the difference between the unit costs per prisoner movement specified in the contract with Group 4 escort services and the actual costs per prisoner movement to date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 14 June 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about unit costs per prisoner movement for the court escort service.

The court escort contract is not based on a unit cost per prisoner movement since costs are related not only to the number of prisoner movements, but also to the geographical distribution and the length of the journeys involved. The contract price is based on an estimate of the peak demand and distribution of journeys with which the contractor is expected to cope.

Temazepam

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultations he has had recently about a possible rescheduling of temazepam; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: In view of the current level of misuse, the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs has been reviewing the statutory controls on temazepam. In November 1992 the council recommended in principle that the supply and possession of the drug should be subject to stricter controls and that it should be transferred from schedule 4 to schedule 3 of the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 1985.

The Home Office subsequently sought comments on this proposal from over 100 organisations and professional bodies, including the principal manufacturers of temazepam. The advisory council has recently considered the responses to this consultation, and I expect shortly to receive its conclusions.

Prisons

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place copies in the Library of the specifications for the contracts to run the Wolds and Strangeways prisons.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Reponsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Leter from Derek Lewis to Mr. John McAllion, dated 14 June 1993:

WOLDS AND STRANGEWAYS PRISONS

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking if copies can be placed in the Library of the specifications for the contracts to run Wolds and Strangeways prisons.

A copy of the operational specification for HM Prison Wolds, which formed part of the tender documents and the contract service requirement, was placed in the Library of the House on 2 May 1991. Similarly, a copy of the operational specification for HM Prison Manchester was placed in the Library on 27 October 1992.

Rape

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by year for the last five years, and for the current year to date *(a)* the number of cases of (i) rape and (ii) attempted rape of women reported and *(b)* the number of successful convictions that ensued.

Mr. Maclean: Information on the number of offences recorded by the police and the number of males convicted of rape is contained in the table.

England and Wales

Year	*Number of offences recorded*[1]	*Number of males convicted*		
		Rape	*Attempted rape*	*Other*[2]
1988	2,855	413	79	7
1989	2,305	471	111	6
1990	3,391	455	78	8
1991	4,045	466	64	7
1992	4,142	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—

[1] Offences of attempted rape are included in the rape classification and cannot be separately identified.

[2] Includes man having unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman who is a defective (Sexual Offences Act 1956 S7 as amended by Mental Health Act 1959, S127); male member of staff of hospital or mental nursing home having unlawful sexual intercourse with female patient (Mental Health Act 1959 S128(1)(a)): and man having unlawful sexual intercouse with mentally disordered female patient who is subject to this care (Mental Health Act 1959 S128(1)(b)).

[3] Not yet available.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he has taken since the publication of his Department's research and planning unit paper 71 relating to rape.

Mr. Maclean: This research examined court cases dating from 1985 and was published in March of this year. Government policies on rape since the time of the original research have focused on achieving improvements in the treatment of victims and in encouraging them to report these crimes. As the research paper acknowledges, important changes in the handling of rape cases have also occurred, with the establishment of the Crown Prosecution Service and the issue of clear guidance from the Court of Appeal on the sentences which should be imposed on those convicted of violent and sexual crime.

Following Home Office guidance in 1986, the police are increasingly alert to the special needs of rape victims. Rape examination units have been set up. The aim is to treat victims sensitively and to provide them with information about medical support and counselling services. It is believed that this has encouraged more women to come forward to report to the police that they have been raped.

Action against rape also involves a range of measures designed to ensure that offenders are brought to justice, punished appropriately, and treated, where possible, so as to reduce the risk of their re-offending. The maximum penalty for attempted rape was increased to life imprisonment in the Sexual Offences Act 1985, and anonymity for rape victims was strengthened in the Criminal Justice Act 1988. In addition, the Criminal Justice Act 1991 provides courts with powers to impose sentences which reflect the need to protect the public from serious harm.

Bosnian Refugees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the quota of 1,0000 ex-detainees to be accepted from prison camps in Bosnia, together with their families dependants, to be reached.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No estimate can be given. The rate of arrival in the United Kingdom is dependent on the rate of referral by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The referral rate is in turn affected by the rate at which releases can be negotiated by the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the international organisations' ability to transport dependants across difficult and dangerous areas in Bosnia to Croatia.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what official monitoring is taking place at the transit camp in Karlovac, Bosnia, of the processing of ex-detainees' applications to come to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The arrangements for the protection, accommodation, screening and monitoring of former detainees at the transit camp in Karlovac, Croatia, are the responsibility of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The UNHCR is in regular contact with the British embassy in Zagreb but there is no official United Kingdom representation at the camp.

Animal Testing

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what guidelines he has introduced to control and monitor non-medical testing on animals; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what controls and safeguards he has introduced to ensure that essential medical research experiments on animals are carried out humanely and with the minimum of suffering; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Section 5(3) of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 specifies the purposes for which scientific work on living animals may be performed. Most of these are concerned in some direct way with human, animal or plant health, but the definition extends also to work designed to promote progress generally in the biological or behavioural sciences, or undertaken in the context of tertiary and higher education and training or forensic science. Other provisions of the Act ensure that

work is permitted for any of these purposes only where fully justified, and subject to strict controls designed to protect the welfare of the animals concerned.

Metropolitan Police (Attacks)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women police officers serving in the Metropolitan police suffered physical injuries by being attacked either with a firearm or a knife in the course of their police duties during the year 1992.

Mr. Charles Wardle: During 1992, 46 Metropolitan police officers were injured with either a firearm or sharp instrument. Of these, 44 were male officers and two were female officers.

Police First Aid Training

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department at what intervals after their basic training police officers receive updating of their first aid training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: All probationary constables are trained to St. John Ambulance certificate level at the district training centres.

After completion of the foundation course, responsibility for further first aid training falls to individual police forces. Some continue with the St. John Ambulance service, which has a re-qualification period of three years, while others run their own courses under the auspices of other bodies such as the Health and Safety Executive or the Red Cross. The re-qualification period under these schemes varies from force to force.

Prince Tomislav of Jugoslavia

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what restrictions are placed on political activity as a condition of residence for foreigners in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement on the case of Prince Tomislav of Jugoslavia.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None. Foreign nationals are, of course, subject to the normal criminal law and may be liable to deportation if they engage in activities which render their presence not conducive to the public good. Prince Tomislav Karadjordjevich has been lawfully resident in the United Kingdom for many years.

Parliamentary Constituencies

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the theoretical entitlement, in terms of number of parliamentary constituencies, of each English county and London borough for 1991 and for 1993.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The theoretical entitlement in terms of parliamentary constituencies for counties and London boroughs in 1991 is listed. These figures form the basis on which the Boundary Commission for England is conducting its general review of parliamentary constituencies. Corresponding figures for 1993 are not yet available.

County	*Theoretical entitlement*
Greater Manchester	27·78
Merseyside	15·72
South Yorkshire	14·54
Tyne and Wear	12·65
West Midlands	28·61
West Yorkshire	22·75
Avon	10·48
Bedfordshire	5·61
Berkshire	7·92
Buckinghamshire	6·82
Cambridgeshire	7·09
Cheshire	10·67
Cleveland	6·04
Cornwall	5·34
Cumbria	5·55
Derbyshire	10·49
Devon	11·34
Dorset	7·56
County Durham	6·80
East Sussex	7·93
Essex	17·06
Gloucestershire	5·94
Hampshire	17·19
Hereford and Worcester	7·59
Hertfordshire	10·78
Humberside	9·69
Isle of Wight	1·47
Kent	16·67
Lancashire	15·44
Leicestershire	9·69
Lincolnshire	6·60
Norfolk	8·48
Northamptonshire	6·32
Northumberland	3·44
North Yorkshire	8·02
Nottinghamshire	11·32
Oxfordshire	6·06
Shropshire	4·53
Somerset	5·26
Staffordshire	11·63
Suffolk	6·95
Surrey	11·24
Warwickshire	5·46
West Sussex	8·05
Wiltshire	6·21

London borough	*Theoretical entitlement*
Barking and Dagenham	1·61
Barnet	3·07
Bexley	2·43
Brent	2·54
Bromley	3·33
Camden	1·79
Croydon	3·42
Ealing	2·75
Enfield	2·85
Greenwich	2·30
Hackney	1·91
Hammersmith and Fulham	1·44
Haringey	2·09
Harrow	2·12
Havering	2·61
Hillingdon	2·59
Hounslow	2·25
Islington	1·60
Kensington and Chelsea	1·24
Kingston upon Thames	1·35
Lambeth	2·45
Lewisham	2·53
Merton	1·76
Newham	2·26
Redbridge	2·51

London borough	Theoretical entitlement
Richmond upon Thames	1·66
Southwark	2·57
Sutton	1·82
Tower Hamlets	1·53
Waltham Forest	2·38
Wandsworth	2·83
Westminster	1·57
City of London	0·06

Guards Divisions (Germany)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost of the Metropolitan police of closing the M4 for the tanks of the Life Guards and Blues and Royals to return to Windsor on 28 May following Thursday's Horse Guards Parade ceremony and of policing the journey; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The motorway was not closed. Cars were prevented from entering the motorway temporarily as the convoy approached each junction in order to allow it to proceed en bloc.

The escort was provided at no additional cost to the Metropolitan police.

Prison Service (Market Testing)

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Prison Service staff will be involved in market-testing exercises between September 1993 and March 1995; and how many prison establishments will be involved.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The functions being market tested in the Prison Service up to September 1993 were included in the "Citizens's Charter First Report 1992". There are approximately 1,800 posts in these areas. This is still our existing programme, although some areas being market tested will overrun the original target date for completion.

The chief executive of the Prison Service will make recommendations to me later this year on the extent, form and timetable for private sector involvement in the management of prisons. This will include recommendations on future candidates for market testing.

Crimes (Weapons)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the number of reported criminal cases covering the Metropolitan police area for the year 1992 in which a knife or a gun was used during the furtherance of a criminal act.

Mr. Maclean: The number of offences in which a knife was used are not collected centrally.

The latest available figures for notifiable offences recorded by the Metropolitan police in which a firearm was reported to have been used, for 1991, were published in "Criminal statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary tables 1991", volume 3, table S3.1(A), a copy of which is in the Library.

False Arrest

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now introduce a scheme to compensate all those held in custody and subsequently found innocent of charges aganist them on a daily payment basis between the times they are first charged and the day on which they are released.

Mr. Maclean: Section 133 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 provides for compensation to be paid to a person whose conviction is quashed on an appeal out of time where a new or newly discovered fact shows beyond reasonable doubt that there has been a miscarriage of justice. In addition, I am willing to authorise ex gratia payments in cases not falling within the statutory provision in the circumstances set out by my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) on 29 November 1985, at columns *691-92*. In all cases where the payment of compensation is approved, the amount awarded is determined after consideration by an independent assessor, who applies principles analogous to those governing the assessment of damages for civil wrongs.

It has been the long-standing policy of successive Governments that compensation should not be payable merely because at the trial or on appeal the prosecution was unable to sustain the burden of proof beyond a reasonable doubt in relation to the specific charge that was brought, and I have no plans to change this policy by introducing a scheme of automatic compensation for all persons held in custody and subsequently acquitted.

Operation Bumblebee

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the success of Operation Bumblebee in the London borough of Newham; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Operation Bumblebee, the Metropolitan police service's campaign against burglary, was extended to all its areas, including that covering the London borough of Newham, on 1 June 1993. It is too early to assess its success. However, 40 premises have already been searched and 22 arrests have been made within the borough. It would seem that the success of the operation in drawing on the support of local people, is likely to be repeated in Newham as it has been elsewhere in London.

Immigration

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications from *(a)* husbands, *(b)* fiancés, *(c)* wives and *(d)* fiancées have been (i) decided, (ii) granted and (iii) refused in (A) Bombay, (B) New Delhi, (C) Madras, (D) Calcutta, (E) Islamabad, (F) Karachi, (G) Dhaka, (H) Colombo, (J) Manila and (K) Bangkok in each quarter since March 1992; how many such applications in each category and for each quarter were refused (1) wholly and (2) partly because the officer was not satisfied (I) that the primary purpose of the marriage was not immigration or (II) that the couple could support and accommodate themselves without recourse to public funds; what was the refusal rate in each instance; and what percentage of these refusals was *(v)* wholly and *(w)* partly on primary purpose grounds, and *(x)* wholly and *(y)* partly on support and accommodation grounds.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information for the Indian sub-continent for each quarter of 1992 and for the first quarter of 1993 is given in the tables. Where the numbers

are small, figures for the individual posts have been combined. Information on refusals which takes account of successful appeals is not compiled for periods shorter than 12 months. Corresponding information for Colombo, Manila and Bangkok is not available centrally.

Table 1

Decisions on applications from Spouses and Fiance(e)s applying in the Indian Sub-continent for entry clearance for settlement in the United Kingdom

Number of persons or percentage

Husbands

	1992				1993	
	1st quarter	*2nd quarter*	*3rd quarter*	*4th quarter*	*Year*	*1st quarter*
New Delhi (including Calcutta)						
Applications decided	70	60	120	100	360	90
Applications granted[1]	50	40	90	70	250	60
Application refused initially	30	30	40	30	130	30
Refusal rate (percentage)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	28	n/a
Bombay (including Madras)						
Applications decided	110	80	150	70	420	90
Applications granted[2]	50	50	150	60	320	70
Application refused initially	70	40	40	30	170	30
Refusal rate (percentage)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	21	n/a
Dhaka						
Applications decided	110	160	340	250	880	n/a
Applications granted	70	110	290	250	730	n/a
Application refused initially	50	70	90	60	270	n/a
Refusal rate (percentage)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	15	n/a
Islamabad (including Karachi)						
Applications decided	730	620	1,080	1,030	3,480	1,090
Applications granted[2]	340	470	840	730	2,370	660
Application refused initially	520	290	340	400	1,550	550
Refusal rate (percentage)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	28	n/a

Number of persons or percentage

Fiances

	1992				1993	
	1st quarter	*2nd quarter*	*3rd quarter*	*4th quarter*	*Year*	*1st quarter*
New Delhi (including Calcutta)						
Applications decided	60	20	30	40	160	50
Applications granted[2]	30	10	10	10	70	20
Application refused initially	30	10	20	30	100	30
Refusal rate (percentage)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	54	n/a
Bombay (including Madras)						
Applications decided	50	40	30	60	180	40
Applications granted[2]	10	20	20	30	70	20
Application refused initially	50	30	20	40	140	30
Refusal rate (percentage)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	61	n/a
Dhaka						
Applications decided	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	n/a
Applications granted[2]	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	n/a
Application refused initially	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	n/a
Refusal rate (percentage)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	(3)	n/a
Islamabad (including Karachi)						
Applications decided	40	60	40	40	190	40
Applications granted[2]	30	30	30	20	110	30
Application refused initially	30	50	30	30	140	30
Refusal rate (percentage)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	42	n/a

Number of persons or percentage

Wives

	1992				1993	
	1st quarter	*2nd quarter*	*3rd quarter*	*4th quarter*	*Year*	*1st quarter*
New Delhi (including Calcutta)						
Applications decided	200	170	240	230	830	00
Applications granted[2]	180	160	190	190	700	160
Application refused initially	30	30	50	50	150	40
Refusal rate (percentage)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	15	n/a

Number of persons or percentage

Wives

	1992					1993
	1st quarter	*2nd quarter*	*3rd quarter*	*4th quarter*	*Year*	*1st quarter*
Bombay (including Madras)						
Applications decided	370	290	320	290	1,270	210
Applications granted[2]	330	270	300	260	1,160	200
Application refused initially	50	30	30	40	140	20
Refusal rate (percentage)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	8	n/a
Dhaka						
Applications decided	260	180	220	350	1,000	n/a
Applications granted[2]	220	160	200	290	870	n/a
Application refused initially	40	30	30	60	150	n/a
Refusal rate (percentage)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	12	n/a
Islamabad (including Karachi)						
Applications decided	950	680	680	730	3,040	920
Applications granted[2]	830	620	590	630	2,670	780
Application refused initially	140	80	100	120	440	160
Refusal rate (percentage)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	12	n/a

Fiancees

Number of persons or percentage

	1992					1993
	1st quarter	*2nd quarter*	*3rd quarter*	*4th quarter*	*Year*	*1st quarter*
New Delhi (including Calcutta)						
Applications decided	50	40	50	50	170	50
Applications granted[2]	30	20	30	30	110	30
Application refused initially	20	20	20	20	70	20
Refusal rate (percentage)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	35	n/a
Bombay (including Madras)						
Applications decided	40	40	30	60	180	30
Applications granted[2]	30	20	20	50	130	30
Application refused initially	10	20	10	10	50	[1]—
Refusal rate (percentage)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	25	n/a
Dhaka						
Applications decided	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	20	n/a
Applications granted[2]	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	10	n/a
Application refused initially	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	10	n/a
Refusal rate (percentage)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	46	n/a
Islamabad (including Karachi)						
Applications decided	60	40	50	50	190	40
Applications granted[2]	40	30	40	40	150	30
Application refused initially	20	10	10	10	40	10
Refusal rate (percentage)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	20	n/a

[1] Five or fewer.
[2] Granted initially or on appeal.
[3] Percentage not calculated for five or fewer applicants refused.
n/a = Not available.

Note: All figures are rounded to the nearest 10 except percentages.

Table 2

Spouses and fiance(e)s in the Indian sub-continent refused[2] entry clearance for settlement in the United Kingdom in 1992 on grounds of primary purpose or accommodation and maintenance

	Number refused because primary purpose of the marriage was to obtain admission to the United Kingdom		*Number refused because couple could not accommodate and/or maintain themselves without recourse to public funds*	
	Soley for this reason	*Partly for this reason*	*Soley for this reason*	*Partly for this reason*
(a) Number of persons refused[2] for year 1992				
New Delhi (including Calcutta)				
Husbands	70	10	[1]—	10
Fiances	70	10	[1]—	10
Wives	70	20	10	20
Fiancees	40	10	[1]—	[1]—

	Number refused because primary purpose of the marriage was to obtain admission to the United Kingdom		Number refused because couple could not accommodate and/or maintain themselves without recourse to public funds	
	Solely for this reason	Partly for this reason	Solely for this reason	Partly for this reason
Bombay (including Madras)				
Husbands	80	10	[1]—	10
Fiances	90	10	[1]—	10
Wives	50	20	10	20
Fiancees	20	10	[1]—	10
Dhaka				
Husbands	50	40	30	30
Fiances	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Wives	10	10	40	20
Fiancees	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Islamabad (including Karachi)				
Husbands	560	430	110	380
Fiances	60	10	10	10
Wives	40	40	200	40
Fiancees	[1]—	10	10	10
(b) Number of persons refused[2] as a percentage of total refusals[2] for year 1992				
New Delhi (including Calcutta)				
Husbands	69	12	[3]—	12
Fiances	82	11	[3]—	10
Wives	59	16	9	16
Fiancees	66	21	[3]—	[3]—
Bombay (including Madras)				
Husbands	82	11	[3]—	10
Fiances	80	8	[3]—	7
Wives	50	14	11	14
Fiancees	46	18	[3]—	16
Dhaka				
Husbands	35	29	20	20
Fiances	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
Wives	9	7	31	20
Fiancees	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
Islamabad (including Karachi)				
Husbands	51	39	10	35
Fiances	65	13	7	12
Wives	10	10	54	11
Fiancees	[3]—	30	30	38

Notes: All figures are rounded to the nearest 10 except percentages.
[1] Five or fewer.
[2] Applications refused initially, minus applications granted on appeal.
[3] Percentage not calculated for five or fewer applications refused.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken or plans to take to adopt into domestic legislation the resolution concerning host third countries adopted in London on 30 November by the Ministers responsible for immigration.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The draft immigration rules on asylum that have been made available to accompany the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill are consistent with the principles of this resolution. A final version of the rules will be laid before Parliament following enactment of the Bill.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when a draft convention parallel to the Dublin convention will be placed before the meeting of the Ministers responsible for immigration of the EC states at their meeting on 1 and 2 June in Copenhagen; and to which countries the draft convention will be opened.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Ministers have agreed that substantive negotiations with third countries on a draft convention parallel to the Dublin convention cannot take place until all 12 member states have ratified the Dublin convention. However, preliminary discussions have been conducted with Austria, Finland, Norway, Switzerland, Sweden and Canada and these are being extended to other interested European states.

Automated Fingerprint Recognition

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a copy of the report submitted to the Ministers responsible for immigration at their meeting of 30 November in London by the ad hoc group, immigration, on the establishment of a European automated fingerprint recognition system (EURODAC).

Mr. Charles Wardle: No, it was not a public document, but a working paper reporting progress. Current work on EURODAC concerns the technical practicalities of such a system. No final decision has been taken on its creation.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis giving details of how many Metropolitan police officers have been suspended from duty for *(a)* more than one month, *(b)* more than three months and *(c)* more than one year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Of the 52 officers suspended from duty as at 1 June 1993, two officers have been suspended for less than one month, 13 have been suspended for one to three months, 34 have been suspended for three to 12 months, and three have been suspended for more than one year.

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those parliamentary constituencies where the Metropolitan police area extends beyond the boundaries of the London boroughs.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The parliamentary constituencies where the Metropolitan police area extends beyond the boundaries of the London boroughs are:

Brentford and Ongar
Broxbourne
Epping Forest
Epsom and Ewell
Harlow
Hertsmere
Reigate
Spelthorne.

Firearms

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the national rules of member states of the putative European union concerning the sale of firearms and other offensive weapons, including gases; and if he will state the number and title of any existing or forthcoming regulation or direction related thereto.

Mr. Charles Wardle: European Community directive 91/477/EEC on the control of the acquisition and possession of weapons was adopted in June 1991. The Firearms Acts (Amendment) Regulations 1992 implemented provisions of the directive in Great Britain with effect from 1 January 1993.

The directive sets minimum standards which all member states must achieve in their domestic firearms controls including controls on sales. Member states can have stricter controls than the minimum. The directive leaves it to member states to decide their own national controls on offensive weapons and gas spray devices. Full details of the extent to which other member states' controls exceed the directive's minimum requirements and of their controls on sales of other weapons have yet to be received.

Turkish Cyprus

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what steps is he taking to prevent the entry into the United Kingdom of visitors from Turkish Cyprus who have no valid or internationally recognised travel documents;

(2) what steps he is taking to prevent illegal travel documents issued by the Turkish Cypriot authorities being used for travel between Cyprus or Turkey and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The territorial entity calling itself the Turkish republic of northern Cyprus is not recognised by the United Kingdom and the travel documents which it issues are not accepted by the United Kingdom as valid travel documents. It is our present practice, however, to regard such documents as providing satisfactory evidence of identity and Cypriot citizenship, so that Cypriot citizens living in northern Cyprus are not on that ground prevented from entering the United Kingdom, provided that the other requirements of the immigration rules are met.

Drugs (West Yorkshire)

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many class A drug users were estimated to be in west Yorkshire; and how many drug-related criminal offences took place in west Yorkshire in each year since 1990.

Mr. Maclean: The total number of persons notified to the Home Office as being addicted to class A drugs in west Yorkshire in 1992 is given in table A3 of the Home Office statistical bulletin "Statistics of drug addicts notified to the Home Office, United Kingdom, 1992" (area tables). It is impossible to estimate the total number of class A drug users because of the clandestine nature of drug misuse.

The number of persons found guilty or cautioned for offences against the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 in west Yorkshire is given in table A2.1 of the Home Office statistical bulletin "Statistics of drugs seizures and offenders dealt with, United Kingdom, 1991" (area tables). Copies of the bulletins are in the Library.

Immigration (Channel Ports)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people arriving on a cross-channel ferry have been refused leave to enter the United Kingdom and removed since 1 January at *(a)* Dover western docks, *(b)* Dover eastern docks, *(c)* Folkestone and *(d)* Ramsgate.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The available information is given in the table:

Passengers refused leave to enter, and removed from, selected ports in the period January to April 1993

Port	*Number of persons*
Dover west	42
Dover east	808
Folkestone	16
Ramsgate	11

EC Immigration Ministers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what matters were discussed in the ad hoc group meeting of the Home Affairs Ministers responsible for immigration matters in the European Community at its meeting in June; what discussions arising from the meeting are continuing; and in what form conclusions will be presented to Parliament.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer to the answer which my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary gave on 9 June 1993 at column *246*, which gave an account of this meeting. Discussions will continue on a range of matters set out in the working programmes on immigration and asylum agreed by the European Council at Maastricht in December 1991.

Working Holidaymakers Scheme

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the numbers and nationalities of individuals from the Commonwealth entering the United Kingdom on the working holidaymakers scheme for each year since 1990, and the first quarter of 1993; and what plans he has to alter the scheme.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 11 June 1993]:* Reliable figures on admissions of working holidaymakers are available only from 1 May 1990 and are given in the table. The operation of the scheme is under review but there are no plans to abolish it.

Admissions of working holidaymakers at United Kingdom ports

Number of persons

Nationality	*1990, May to December*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993, January to March*[2]
Australia	11,600	14,200	15,400	3,540
Canada	1,800	1,750	1,750	230
Jamaica	50	30	70	[1]
Malaysia	30	40	30	[1]
New Zealand	6,440	7,260	6,500	1,290
Zimbabwe	160	190	170	50
Other Commonwealth	120	120	130	50
TOTAL	20,100	23,600	24,000	5,160

[1] Five or fewer.
[2] Data are provisional.

EMPLOYMENT

Coal Mine Statistics

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many fatalities per 1,000 manshifts there were for each of the last 10 complete years for which statistics are available *(a)* in private coal mines, *(b)* among subcontract workers doing work for British Coal and *(c)* among British Coal's employees.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A fatality rate based on manshifts is not available for private mines.

The table shows the fatalities per 100,000 manshifts at British Coal Corporation—BCC—mines from 1985-86, the first year for which a discrete rate for BCC mines was calculated by the Health and Safety Executive's—HSE—inspectorate of mines.

Fatal accidents to subcontractors at BCC mines are included in the rates shown in the table. Separate records for subcontractors have not been maintained by HSE.

British Coal Corporation Mines

Year	*Fatal Injury Rate per 100,000 Shifts*[1]
1985-86	0·08
1986-87	0·05
1987-88	0·04
1988-89	0·08
1989-90	0·01
1990-91	0·07
1991-92	0·08
1992-93[2]	0·03

[1] Includes accidents to contractors working at BCC mines
[2] Provisional

Women Chief Executives

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many women are currently chief executives of nationalised industries; and what monitoring he carries out of the number of women in chief executive positions in the private sector.

Miss Widdecombe: Currently there are no women chief executives of nationalised industries, although there are women on some of their boards. The Government encourage all employers to make the best use of women's talents at all levels in their organisations. It is for employers to ensure this is happening by monitoring. We firmly believe that women should be given every opportunity to advance their careers and progress to higher levels.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of people aged 18, 19, 20 and 21 years are currently out of work.

Miss Widdecombe: Information on claimant unemployment by pre-determined age bands, expressed as a percentage of the work force in those particular age bands, is available on a quarterly basis and only at national level. The latest available data for April are as follows:

Age group	Unemployment rate
18-19	18·1
20-24	16·7

The latest available labour force survey (LFS) data on unemployment by age in the United Kingdom—using the ILO measure of unemployment—are given in the following table:

Unemployment by Age, United Kingdom, Spring 1992 LFS

Thousands

Age	Unemployment rate[1]
18	14·8
19	18·3
20	17·9
21	16·8

[1] Unemployment as a percentage of those who are economically active.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish figures showing for each occupational group within the standard occupational classifications *(a)* the numbers currently employed and *(b)* the number of long-term unemployed claimants whose previous occupation fell within that group, giving the most recently available data.

Miss Widdecombe: The most recent available information from the labour force survey is given in the following table:

Persons in employment by current occupation and long-term ILO unemployed claimants by previous occupation

Great Britain (thousands)

SOC major Occupations	In employment[1]	Long-term ILO unemployed Claimants[2]
All persons	[3]24,967	[3]759
1. Managers and administrators	3,803	46
2. Professional occupations	2,494	10
3. Associate professions and technical occupations	2,239	28
4. Clerical, secretarial occupations	3,827	56
5. Craft and related occupations	3,386	177
6. Personal, protective occupations	2,492	43
7. Sales occupations	1,975	35
8. Plant and machine operatives	2,382	106
9. Other occupations	2,200	127

[1] Includes employees, self-employed, those on government employment and training programmes, and unpaid family workers.
[2] Includes those who are ILO unemployed for more than a year and claiming unemployment related benefit.
[3] Includes those who did not state their occupations.
Source: Labour Force Survey—Autumn (September-November) 1992 (not seasonally adjusted).

Employee Representation

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish the case submitted by the Government to the European Court of Justice, setting out its interpretation of the directive concerning employee representation.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I assume that the question refers to applications lodged by the European Commission with the European Court of Justice which allege that the United Kingdom has failed fully to implement the acquired rights and collective redundancies directives. Communications between the court and the Government relating to these applications are confidential between the parties concerned.

Work Permits

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many work permits were issued to non-EC persons in each of the last three years.

Miss Widdecombe: The number of work permits issued by the Department in each of the last three years is as follows:

Year	Number of work permits issued
1990	43,619
1991	37,989
1992	37,917

Apprentices

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of apprentices in each of the last 20 years.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is not available for the period requested. Estimates from the labour force survey since 1979 of the number of people in Great Britain undertaking apprenticeships are given in the following table:

Numbers of apprentices by year

(Great Britain)

Spring each year	Thousands
1979	367
1981	n.a.
1983	363
1984	332
1985	357
1986	318
1987	314
1988	329
1989	367
1990	352
1991	330
1992	325

Source: Labour Force Survey.

Working Hours

Ms Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment his Department has made of the health and safety implications of working long and unsocial hours.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Department is advised on such matters by the Health and Safety Commission, which through its Executive, has commissioned or supported a wide range of research, including two reviews of the scientific evidence on the health and safety implications of shiftwork. In the light of available evidence we do not consider that there is a need for general restrictions on hours of work on health and safety grounds.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what consultancy reports his Department has received concerning the misuse of funds and of independent bank accounts in relation to TECs; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department has received no consultancy reports concerning the misuse of funds and of independent bank accounts in relation to TECs.

Jobcentres

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, (1) pursuant to his answer of 25 February, *Official Report*, column *715*, how many instances have now been notified to him of jobcentres advertising jobs at rates of pay below the relevant wages council minimum;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 25 February, *Official Report*, column *715*, how standard managerial controls operate in cases where jobcentres have advertised jobs at rates of pay below the relevant wages council minimum.

Mr. Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Alan Milburn dated 14 June 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Questions to him about Jobcentres advertisting jobs at rates of pay below the relevant Wages Council minimum and how standard managerial controls operate in such cases. This is something which falls within the responsibilities he has delegated to me as Chief Executive.

One of your questions is about the number of instances of Jobcentres advertising jobs at rates of pay below the relevant Wages Council minimum. Jobcentres should not handle such vacancies and the number of cases where they do so are few and far between. I am of course aware of the recent case in Darlington where a vacancy was accepted which did not meet the minimum wage requirement. Previous to this two vacancies were inadvertently accepted last Autumn which were publicised in the Channel 4 programme "Cutting Edge".

Your other question was how the management controls operate where such cases do arise. I can best answer by describing what happened in the Darlington case.

When the case was brought to the attention of my Jobcentre Manager, the vacancy was immediately removed from display. The employer was contacted and the Wages Council minimum rate of pay was explained.

After contacting the Wages Inspectorate the employer agreed to pay the minimum wage for the job. The vacancy details have been updated and put back on display.

As well as informing the employer of the requirements of the Wages Council minimum wage my manager arranged for all 400 displayed vacancies to be double-checked to ensure that any which fell within the scope of the Wages Council Order did comply with the minimum rates of pay.

I am sorry this incident arose. It has highlighted a possible loophole in our guidance, in that the employer's business was not covered by a Wages Council Order, though it is accepted that the particular occupation was. My people are looking again at the guidance issued to my Jobcentres, which was substantially revised just six months ago. Further guidance will be issued from my Head Office within the next four weeks.

It is up to individual managers to determine how best to monitor the many requirements we have about receipt and display of vacancies in a way which best meets the local labour market situation and I can assure you that the arrangements work well.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Trentham Colliery

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much new money has been allocated to date and for the future to counter unemployment caused by compulsory redundancies at Trentham colliery; what percentage that is of the total money allocated to alleviate job losses in coal mining areas; and how that money is to be spent and by which department or agency acting on his behalf.

Miss Widdecombe: An additional £4·9 million has been made available to Staffordshire training and enterprise council (TEC) and the employment service to provide a range of further help for unemployed people in the Trentham colliery area. This is 6·5 per cent. of the extra £75 million available for additional assessment, jobsearch, training, retraining, assistance for new businesses and voluntary work. Staffordshire TEC plans to supplement this with a further £2 million of its own resources.

This provision forms part of the £200 million regeneration package for pit closure areas made available by the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of the Environment and English Estates. There is also help for redundant coalworkers provided by British Coal Enterprise.

North Staffordshire Coalfield

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make it his policy to keep all hon. Members representing the North Staffordshire coalfield fully and regularly briefed on all relevant initiatives undertaken by his Department, agencies or consultants acting on his behalf.

Miss Widdecombe: Major national initiatives are announced by the Department. Hon. Members are welcome to approach me at any time, but it might be quicker and more effective if they kept in touch with the Staffordshire training and enterprise council (TEC) and the local employment service (ES). Both Richard Ward, chief executive of Staffordshire TEC at Festival way, Festival park, Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire, ST1 5TP, and Joy Cross, ES area manager, Blackburn house, The Midway, Newcastle under Lyme, Staffordshire, ST5 1TJ, will be pleased to take inquiries from hon. Members at any time.

SOCIAL SECURITY

United States Citizens

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answers to the hon. Members for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) and for Glasgow, Garscadden, (Mr. Dewar) of 29 April, *Official Report*, columns *526-27*, how many other residents of the United States have received United Kingdom social security, housing or other benefits this year.

Mr. Burt: In December 1991, the latest date for which figures are currently available, 67,596 people resident in

the United States of America were receiving United Kingdom retirement and widows pensions. There are currently 1,080 residents of the United States of America in receipt of war pensions. Information on other benefits is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many requests for an appeal against a disability living allownce or attendance allowance decision for claims made on or after 3 February 1992 have been received; and how many of these and what percentage *(a)* have been successful, *(b)* have been unsuccessful and *(c)* remain outstanding.

Mr. Scott: The information requested in connection to disability living allowance is in the table:

Disability Living Allowance
(Social Security and Disability Appeal Tribunals)

3 February 1992 to 31 May 1993	*Number of Appeals*	*Percentage*
Registered	12,345	—
(a) Successful	265	2·1
(b) Unsuccessful	527	4·3
(c) Outstanding	11,553	93·6

The information relating to attendance allowance is not available in the form requested. Information on attendance allowance cases heard at disability appeal tribunals is not currently available. The most recent information is as follows:

Attendance Allowance
(Social Security Appeal Tribunals only)

1 January 1992 to 30 September 1992	*Number of appeals*	*Percentage*
Registered	309	—
Cases heard and decided	175	—
(a) Successful	60	34·3
(b) Unsuccessful	115	65·7
(c) Outstanding at 30 September 1992	313	—

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to amend the entitlements currently enjoyed by those in receipt of disability living allowance to exemption from vehicle excise duty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I have been asked to reply.

In the March 1992 Budget, the Chancellor announced the repeal of the disabled passengers scheme which grants exemption from vehicle excise duty to certain disabled people in receipt of attendance allowance or the care component of the disability living allowance. As my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General said in the Finance Bill debate on 12 March 1992, *Official Report*, columns 148-52, the repeal is to be effected by an appointed day order which will contain provisions to ensure that anyone currently benefiting from this scheme will continue to do so. The appointed day order has yet to be made.

The repeal does not affect entitlement to VED exemption granted under the war pensioners mobility supplement or the higher rate mobility component of the disability living alowance, or to invalid carriages.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many invalidity benefit recipients in Great Britain received *(a)* invalidity benefit alone, *(b)* invalidity benefit with disability living allowance or attendance allowance but no income-related benefits and *(c)* invalidity benefit supplemented by one of the income-related benefits, at the latest available date.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available in the form requested. Such information as is available is as follows.
Number of Invalidity Benefit recipients in Great Britain—1,490,000[1].
Number of Invalidity Benefit recipients also receiving Attendance Allowance, but no Income Support—65,900[2].
Number of Invalidity Benefit recipients also receiving Income Support—130,000[3].
Number of Invalidity Benefit recipients also receiving Housing Benefit/Community Charge Benefit but no Income Support—366,000[4].

Notes:
[1] Source: Departmental Report 1993—estimated average numbers receiving benefit at any one time in 1992-93. The figure includes Invalidity Benefit recipients who receive another benefit.
[2] Source: One per cent sample of incapacity benefit claimants at 30 March 1991. Information about the number of Invalidity Benefit recipients getting Disability Living Allowance is not available.
[3] Source: Annual Statistical Enquiry May 1992. Figures include beneficiaries also receiving Housing Benefit/ Community Charge Benefit.
[4] Source: One per cent sample of Housing Benefit/ Community Charge Benefit cases at May 1991.

Income Support

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what considerations underlay his decision to delete paragraph 1(h) of the Income Support General Regulations 1987.

Mr. Burt: Paragraph 1(h) of schedule 3 to the Income Support (General) Regulations provided for housing costs analogous to those listed in preceding sub-paragraphs to be included in the calculation of benefit entitlement. This gave rise to inconsistent decisions by the independent adjudicating authorities. To clarify the position, an amendment was made to replace this with individual provisions for specific costs. A further addition in respect of chief rents will be made shortly.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make an income support payment to Mrs. J. Young of Melton road, King's Heath, in respect of buildings insurance obtained as a condition of a mortgage.

Mr. Burt: The Secretary of State has suspended payment of any awards in respect of buildings insurance following a commissioner's decision of 14 October 1992, pending the outcome of an appeal to the Court of Session.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many income support claimants who had to pay buildings insurance as a condition of their mortgage obtain their entitlement to receive payments for this in their income support housing costs for any appropriate period between 11 April 1988, when the flat rate supplementary benefit allowance for such costs was abolished, and 2 February 1993, when paragraph 1(h) of the Income Support General Regulations 1987 was abolished.

Mr. Burt: On 14 October 1992 a social security commissioner decided that buildings insurance payable as a condition of a mortgage could be paid as an income support housing cost. At that time, there were some 500,000 people receiving help with their mortgages through income support. The Secretary of State has appealed against the commissioner's decision to the Court of Session and suspended payment of any awards made as result of it pending the outcome.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what instructions have been issued to officers of the Benefits Agency with regard to applications for income support from the spouses of EC citizens who have travelled to the United Kingdom for a treaty purpose; and if he will publish those instructions.

Mr. Burt: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Graham Allen, dated 11 June 1993:

As Chief Executive to the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what instructions have been issued to officers of the Benefits Agency with regard to applications from spouses of EC citizens who have travelled to the United Kingdom for a treaty purpose; and if he will publish those instructions.

It may help if I explain that instructions on dealing with claims from EC Nationals are held in the Adjudication Officer's Guide (AOG) and the Income Support Manual, which are available for inspection at Benefits Agency Offices, the House of Commons library and some public libraries.

It should be noted that certain EC nationals may only remain in the UK under a treaty purpose on the proviso that they are not dependent on public funds. Where entitlement conditions are satisfied and payment due action is taken as with a claim from a United Kingdom citizen. Therefore, if a claim is received from one of a couple who are living apart, the Agency would ensure action was taken to contact the spouse and seek maintenance to reduce or remove the need for payment from public funds.

Offices have recently been issued with an internal memo advising them of an amendment to Regulation 21 (3) of the Income Support (General) Regulations from 12 April 1993. This provides that a national of a Member state who is subject to a requirement to leave the United Kingdom will no longer be entitled to income support.

The requirement to leave the United Kingdom will be issued by the Home Office to an EC National who has been seeking work in the United Kingdom and receiving Income Support for six months and has neither found work nor has any reasonable prospect of doing so.

I hope this information is helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

Benefits

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, what plans he has to reduce the nominal amount of income assumed on savings for calculation of benefits.

Mr. Burt: Although the rules on the treatment of savings are kept under review, we have no plans for change.

Welfare State Review

Ms Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the insurance and pension companies he has met in the course of his review of the welfare state.

Mr. Hague: Ministers and officials regularly meet insurance and pension providers to discuss issues relevant to the policies of the Department.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Regional Orchestras

3. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is his policy on regional orchestras; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sproat: The Arts Council and the BBC are responsible for formulating policy relating to regional orchestras. They are collaborating on a joint review of orchestral provision, and a report will be considered by their governing councils later this year. A period of public consultation is planned subsequently.

Longford Hall, Stretford

14. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the actions he has taken to secure the future of Longford hall, Stretford.

Mr. Sproat: I have received a report by English Heritage on the works it considers urgently necessary for the building's preservation and am seeking the council's views.

Channel 3 (Takeovers)

16. **Mr. Bryan Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to extend the moratorium on overseas takeovers of Channel 3 franchise companies.

Mr. Brooke: I have no present plans to do so, but I am meeting the ITV companies later today to hear their views on this, and other related issues.

Stonehenge

17. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he next plans to visit Stonehenge to discuss the amenities there.

Mr. Brooke: I have no plans to visit Stonehenge in the near future in an official capacity.

Magic

18. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage whether he will take steps to encourage the promotion of magic as an art in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sproat: Government support for the arts is provided at arm's length through the Arts Council of Great Britain. The council is prepared to consider any application for support on its individual merits.

Departmental Building

19. **Mr. Congdon:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how the move to a new headquarters building will affect the discharge of his Department's responsibilities.

Mr. Brooke: My Department's move to a new headquarters building has enabled its three policy groups and other key elements to be brought together in one central location. This will greatly improve internal communication and lead to greater efficiency as well as enhanced co-ordination of the policy responsibilities.

Tourism

20. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what initiatives he is taking to promote tourism in London.

Mr. Sproat: Government support for tourism is channelled through the British Tourist Authority and the English tourist board. Via the English tourist board, support is also made available to the eleven regional tourist boards, including the London tourist board (LTB). The LTB has a number of initiatives to promote tourism in London, many involving partnerships with private sector organisations.

In addition, the Government have set up the London Forum with the specific task of promoting London overseas. It will operate through two subsidiary companies. One of these, London Visitors, will be chaired by Sir Hugh Bidwell, chairman of the LTB, and will work closely with the LTB to promote tourism in the capital.

Radio Frequencies (London)

21. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to meet the director general of the Radio Authority to discuss AM/FM frequency allocations in London.

Mr. Brooke: I meet the chairman of the Radio Authority from time to time and discuss a range of issues. However, it is for the Radio Authority to determine the allocation of AM/FM frequencies assigned to the authority for services in London.

Hotel and Catering Industry (Deregulation)

22. **Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what proposals he has made recently for deregulation in the hotel and catering industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sproat: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe).

Ancient Monuments

23. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage to what extent he has a duty to protect and restore ancient monuments, antiques and other important artefacts which are within public ownership.

Mr. Sproat: I have duties to compile a list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest and a schedule of monuments, the purpose of which is to provide these with statutory protection, whether they are in private or public ownership. In the case of listed buildings, the protection extends to objects or structures fixed to them or within their curtilage.

I am also responsible for the maintenance of a number of buildings, memorials and statues directly in the care of my Department.

The care of artefacts within museums and galleries is the responsibility of those institutions.

Football Ground Safety

24. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what progress has been made on ground safety improvements at second and third division Football League clubs.

Mr. Brooke: Since 1990, £4,515,269 has been awarded by the Football trust for ground safety improvements by clubs in the second and third divisions of the Football League. Considerable progress has been made by a number of clubs, and I shall be looking to the Football Licensing Authority to ensure that clubs continue to improve the structure and management of their facilities.

Television Signals

25. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will take steps to impose an obligation on the BBC and ITV companies to transmit signals that can be received throughout the relevant regional television or franchise area.

Mr. Brooke: No. It is for the broadcasters to determine their own engineering priorities.

British Library

26. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what progress has been made on the construction of the new British library.

Mr. Sproat: The first phase of the new building is substantially complete. Construction of the final phase began in May this year.

Tourist Attractions (Signing)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received about the signing of tourist attractions.

Mr. Sproat: My right hon. Friend and I receive correspondence on a wide range of issues of relevance to the tourism industry, including signing to tourist attractions. I have received a small number of letters concerning cases where applications for tourist signing have been refused since the basic criteria have not been met.

London City Ballet

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what discussions he has had with the Arts Council chairman concerning the impending closure of the London City Ballet.

Mr. Brooke: While I regret that London City Ballet has decided that it can no longer continue to operate, I cannot

intervene in matters relating to the funding of individual arts organisations, which under the arm's length principle are the responsibility of the Arts Council.

Arts Council

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what discussions he is to have with the Arts Council chairman regarding funding support for organisations which find 90 per cent. of their income from private sources.

Mr. Brooke: I regularly meet the chairman of the Arts Council to discuss a wide range of issues. Decisions on the funding of individual arts organisations are a matter for the Arts Council.

Libraries (Privatisation)

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage which local authorities have agreed to participate in the pilot scheme on privatising public libraries.

Mr. Sproat: I have no current plans, and have proposed no pilot schemes, for privatising public libraries. Every local library authority is statutorily responsible for providing a comprehensive, efficient and—for the most part—free library service in its area.

As my right hon. Friend announced in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) on 10 November 1992, at columns *685-87*, we are examining the scope for contracting out the actual delivery of all or some aspects of the public library service. I propose as part of this examination to use as pilot projects some of the various models for specifying and contracting for library services which library authorities are themselves currently investigating.

From those initially expressing interest, my Department has invited the following authorities to be involved in the exercise on this basis: Bromley; Cambridgeshire; Hereford and Worcester; Kent; Lincolnshire and Birmingham Libraries Co-operative Mechanisation Project—a co-operative group including several library authorities. Discussions with these authorities are continuing—though Bromley has indicated that it no longer wishes to proceed with its proposed project, and has consequently withdrawn its interest. It may be that other authorities and projects will be added before the overall coverage of the exercise is finalised.

Football

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what information he has on attendance figures at soccer matches held between clubs at a senior level of the game in leagues in the pyramid below those of the Football League.

Mr. Brooke: The average home attendance figures for matches in pyramid leagues for 1991-92—the latest year for which complete figures are available—are as follows:

	Attendance
GM Vauxhall Conference	1,214
Diadora League	512
Beazer Homes League	558
Northern League	348

Statues

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what action his Department is taking to protect statuary for which he is responsible from further damage due to the careless and unsupervised cleaning of the external fabric of buildings of which they form a part;

(2) if he will make a statement on the circumstances surrounding the damage done to the statues of Inigo Jones and Andrea Palladio by Michael Rysbrack during the external cleaning of the fabric of Chiswick house, London; and what lessons have been learnt arising from this incident.

Mr. Brooke: The two statues by Michael Rysbrack were cleaned in 1987, at the same time as the decorative architectural detail of the house, using an air, water and abrasive mixture. Though the cleaning process was criticised at the time, both English Heritage and the leading conservators who were consulted found no evidence of significant damage. English Heritage has since made a major commitment to the conservation of the statuary at Chiswick house and has commissioned a survey of the condition of individual sculptures. On the basis of this survey, it plans to spend over £70,000 over the next five years on the outside statuary at Chiswick. Last autumn, it opened a new gallery at Chiswick house devoted to housing the garden statuary, and it plans to move the Rysbrack statues there next year, until such time as their security can be safeguarded.

English Heritage now has full condition surveys for sculpture at all of its sites, with prioritised action plans, and its architectural conservation branch is currently engaged in Britain's largest research programme on stone decay and treatment.

BBC Governors

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he expects to make an announcement on the appointment of the new governors of the BBC.

Mr. Brooke: As soon as Her Majesty the Queen has made the appointments.

National Lottery

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how much public money has been distributed *(a)* to arts activities and *(b)* sports activities in the past five years; how much is expected to be distributed to each as a result of the National Lottery etc. Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Government fund the arts mainly through the Arts Council of Great Britain. The Arts Council's grant in aid for each year since 1989 is as follows:

	£ million
1989-90	155·5
1990-91	175·9
1991-92	[1]194·2
1992-93	221·2
1993-94	225·6

[1] Plus a special payment of £10·8 million to enable the English National Opera to buy the freehold of the Coliseum.

The Government also fund the business sponsorship incentive scheme, the theatres restoration fund and various research projects. For 1993-94, total central Government expenditure additional to the Arts Council's grant in aid will be approximately £5·6 million.

Local authorities also fund arts activities but no definitive figures on their overall expenditure are available.

My Department's funding of sport in the current and previous four years has been as follows:

	£ million
1989-90	42
1990-91	45
1991-92	47
1992-93	50
1993-94	55

In addition, the Government provide substantial support for the local authority expenditure on sport, through the revenue support grant arrangements and basic credit approvals for capital expenditure. Sport has also benefited through the Government's inner-city programmes. The Government are also making up to £75 million available to support Manchester's bid to host the Olympic games in the year 2000. Reductions in the rate of pool betting duty are contributing approximately £44 million per year to the Foundation for Sport and the Arts and to the Football Trust.

The amount of funds distributed to arts, sport and other activities as a result of the national lottery will depend on the total turnover of the lottery and the amounts devoted to prizes and expenses.

British Museum

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage in what form information is available to his Department as to the circumstances in which the gifts of Sir Leonard Woolley of archaelogical objects found at Ur of the Chaldees and other sites in Mesopotamia came into the possession of the British museum.

Mr. Brooke: All the results of the excavation carried out by Sir Leonard Woolley are published in 10 volumes. Archives and records are held by the department of western Asiatic antiquities of the British museum and can be inspected on request. The records relating to the financing and organisation of the expedition, and correspondence with the Iraqi authorities, are in the museum's central archive and are also accessible under the terms of the Public Records Act. If the hon. Member would like any further information on this matter, the director of the British museum would be happy to supply it.

Regional Tourist Boards

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to reform the structure of regional tourist boards following the review of local government.

Mr. Sproat: The regional tourist boards (RTBs) are independent, non-statutory membership organisations and the Government have no power to impose changes in their structure. Local authorities have always been active partners in the work of the regional boards, and I am sure that the RTBs and the new authorities which emerge from the review of local government will wish to ensure that an effective working relationship continues.

Blind People (Television)

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the arrangements which exist to advise blind people of the availability from the Royal National Institute for the Blind of a specially adapted monitor which receives broadcast television signals in sound only.

Mr. Brooke: I understand the RNIB catalogue, which is readily available, includes information about a television sound receiver, which does not need a television licence.

Film Industry

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the latest available figure for his Department's funding of the United Kingdom film industry; what was the equivalent figure in 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: My Department plans to spend £24·4 million on film support in 1993-94.

In the financial year 1979-80, direct Government support for film amounted to some £12·5 million, at 1993 prices. The Eady Levy on box office receipts raised a further £17·25 million, at 1993 prices, in support of the film industry.

S4C

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if the accounts of the Welsh Fourth Channel Authority, S4C, will be submitted annually to the Comptroller and Auditor General; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: No. Under schedule 6 to the Broadcasting Act 1990, the Welsh Fourth Channel Authority (S4C) submits its annual report and statement of accounts to me to lay before Parliament. I can give S4C directions about the form of the accounts, and the appointment of its auditors is subject to my approval.

WALES

Northern Snowdonia

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to designate northern Snowdonia as an environmentally sensitive area.

Mr. Redwood: I have no current plans to designate northern Snowdonia as an environmentally sensitive area. I will study the ADAS report on this matter.

Welsh Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to model the Welsh Chamber of Commerce and Industry upon similar organisations in Baden-Württemberg, Denmark and the Emilia-Romagna region.

Mr. Redwood: As independent private companies, change is a matter for individual chambers and the chamber movement itself.

Mining Development

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the interim development orders in force in Wales giving framework permission for mining development.

Mr. Redwood: This information is not held centrally. Local planning authorities are required to enter details of applications for registration of interim development order permissions, together with details of final determinations, in their planning registers which are open to public inspection.

Tourist Board Grants

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the names and addresses of private companies and hoteliers who have received a Wales tourist board grant; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not held centrally. However, the Wales tourist board publishes a list of grants and loans of £10,000 or more for specific years in its annual reports.

Radon Gas

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales further to his answer of 7 June, *Official Report*, column *134*, regarding radon in homes, how many of the homes surveyed in each year since 1989 in postal district SA and in Wales had radon gas concentrations of *(a)* 0 to 25 bq/cu m, *(b)* 26 to 50 bq/cu m, *(c)* 51 to 100 bq/cu m, *(d)* 101 to 200 bq/cu m and *(e)* more than 200 bq/cu m.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The figures requested are shown in the table:

Radon concentrations in the homes surveyed since 1989, in postal district SA and Wales

Concentration range Bq m3	Number of Homes Postal District SA	Wales
0-25	138	538
26-50	55	260
51-100	29	183
101-200	20	107
>200	8	55

Homelessness

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what was the number of homeless inquiries made under part III of the Housing Act 1985 by district *(a)* in 1991 and *(b)* in 1992;

(2) how many cases were accepted expressed as a percentage of those presented under part III of the Housing Act 1985 by district *(a)* in 1991 and *(b)* in 1992;

(3) how many cases were accepted under part III of the Housing Act 1985 by district *(a)* in 1991 and *(b)* in 1992;

(4) how many cases were presented under part III of the Housing Act 1985 by district *(a)* in 1991 and *(b)* in 1992.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is given in the table:

Activity under Part III of the Housing Act 1985 (Housing the Homeless)

	Enquiries made		Cases Presented		Cases[1] Accepted		Cases accepted[1] as a percentage of those presented	
	1991	1992	1991	1992	1991	1992	1991	1992
Aberconwy	196	199	144	131	37	52	26	40
Alyn and Deeside	252	292	220	246	186	245	85	100
Arfon	45	57	35	41	35	34	100	83
Blaenau Gwent	434	242	377	223	321	203	85	91
Brecknock	114	127	114	130	100	117	88	90
Cardiff	3,163	4,943	2,134	2,592	1,752	2,232	82	86
Carmarthen	87	153	90	153	87	143	97	93
Ceredigion	152	141	152	140	150	140	99	100
Colwyn	83	100	50	70	50	70	100	100
Cynon Valley	576	515	556	262	360	210	65	80
Delyn	1,176	897	766	520	283	213	37	41
Dinefwr	237	267	237	267	187	221	79	83
Dwyfor	90	58	84	57	45	42	54	74
Glyndwr	46	31	34	23	34	23	100	100
Islwyn	376	350	334	324	181	201	54	62
Llanelli	153	116	154	116	153	116	99	100
Lliw Valley	175	159	143	194	103	127	72	65
Meirionnydd	187	110	111	82	100	71	90	87
Merthyr Tydfil	156	93	156	93	129	93	83	100
Monmouth	237	184	237	184	147	113	62	61
Montgomeryshire	170	186	122	128	121	118	99	92
Neath	531	539	383	481	353	392	92	81
Newport	1,074	935	1,074	914	1,074	905	100	99
Ogwr	941	914	836	872	707	903	85	104
Port Talbot	525	578	482	560	124	164	26	29
Preseli	153	238	121	179	102	146	84	82
Radnorshire	19	30	19	30	19	30	100	100
Rhondda	146	165	141	165	138	163	98	99
Rhuddlan	146	96	76	60	51	34	67	57
Rhymney Valley	1,077	1,188	215	165	146	129	68	78
South Pembrokeshire	96	93	96	93	86	80	90	86
Swansea	1,368	1,288	941	932	792	765	84	82
Taff-Ely	649	513	617	513	272	306	44	60

	Enquiries made		Cases Presented		Cases[1] Accepted		Cases accepted[1] as a percentage of those presented	
	1991	1992	1991	1992	1991	1992	1991	1992
Torfaen	1,485	2,403	921	840	522	471	57	56
Vale of Glamorgan	956	975	1,095	639	416	474	38	74
Wrexham Maelor	973	978	851	397	408	487	48	123
Ynys Mon	91	92	54	80	42	78	78	98

[1]In some instances, the number of cases accepted during the year can be higher than the number presented due to some presentations being carried over from the previous year.
Source: Local authority returns.

BTEC Courses

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people have undertaken Business and Technician Education Council courses in Wales in each year since 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The total number of student enrolments on BTEC courses at colleges of higher and further education in Wales in each year since 1988-89 is as follows:

	Number
1988-89	20,453
1989-90	22,061
1990-91	24,190
1991-92	27,448

Sheep Farmers

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a Monday morning visit to Welshpool Smithfield to meet Montgomeryshire sheep farmers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I have no current plans to visit Welshpool Smithfield, but would consider doing so when the opportunity presents itself.

SCOTLAND

Sheep Quota

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish, on a regional basis, the number of farmers deprived of quota as a result of the new sheep quota regulations.

Sir Hector Monro: The main allocations of sheep annual premium quota are still being made and it will also be open to any farmer to apply to the national reserve for allocation from that source. Until those applications have been received and processed it will not be possible to say how many have been successful.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to announce details of the distribution of reserve sheep quota.

Sir Hector Monro: Details of how national reserve quota will be allocated will be announced once the necessary legislation has been placed before the House. We hope to be able to do this before the summer recess.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what financial plans he has to support those farmers deprived of sheep quota after the national reserve is exhausted; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: It remains to be seen what will be the level of demand for allocation from the national reserve of sheep annual premium quota. The national reserve is the mechanism laid down in the European legislation to deal with producers who have not received an initial allocation of quota.

Forestry Commission Land

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will outline the proportion of Forestry Commission land used for *(a)* commercial forestry and *(b)* leisure and recreation.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 8 June 1993]:* The Forestry Commission follows a multiple-purpose land management policy which integrates recreation, wood production and conservation. It is not therefore possible to classify commission land in the way requested.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Vote Office

33. **Ms Quin:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission if he will make a statement on the work of the Vote Office.

Mr. Beith: The main work of the Vote Office is the distribution of parliamentary papers and documents necessary for the conduct of House business and for the parliamentary duties of hon. Members. Certain other documents are held in the Vote Office, at the request of Ministers, for issue to hon. Members. The Deliverer of the Vote, as head of the office, is available to advise hon. Members on their access to other official documents.

Sitting Hours

35. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Lord President of the Council when he expects to bring forward the report of the Select Committee on Sittings of the House for implementation.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

42. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Lord President of the Council when he will introduce proposals for the reform of hours of sitting.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

Select Committee (Sanctions)

36. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will establish a select committee to investigate the actual effect of the imposition of sanctions on countries such as Iraq and Libya.

Mr. Newton: I have no plans to do so. However, the hon. Member may wish to suggest the topic to the relevant departmental select committee, which could perhaps allow him to expand on the points he raised only last Friday during the debate on manufacturing and productivity.

Forestry

37. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what action he proposes to take to ensure that questions relating to forestry in the United Kingdom will continue to be answered in the House following the implementation of the proposals for a Question Time in the Scottish Grand Committee.

Mr. Newton: The proposals of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland entail no diminution of opportunities for questions, whether on forestry or other matters, to be put for answer in the House.

Overseas Development Administration (Questions)

38. **Mr. Ottaway:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make more time available for Overseas Development Administration questions.

Mr. Newton: Having recently revised the oral questions roster to incorporate slots for Duchy of Lancaster and National Heritage questions, I do not think it would be possible to find extra time for ODA questions.

Select Committee Reports

39. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what proposals he has to change the procedure for Government replies to Select Committee reports and debates on them.

Mr. Newton: None. However, the hon. Member may care to submit any proposals of his own to the Procedure Committee.

Procedure (Reform)

40. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Lord President of the Council when he expects to be able to make progress on reforming the procedure of the House; and if he will make a statement.

Select Committee on Members' Interests

41. **Mr. Denham:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what plans he has to alter the powers of the Select Committee on Members' interests.

Mr. Newton: I have no proposals to alter the terms of reference of the Select Committee on Members' Interests.

Visitors

Mr. Sims: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee what plans he has to enable increased numbers of people to visit the Palace of Westminster during the summer recess.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: During the last summer recess there was spare capacity on all but three of the days the Line of Route was open for Members' parties. In these circumstances it is not considered necessary either to increase the maximum number of visitors allowed entry each morning or to increase the number of days when the Line of Route is open.

Executive Agencies

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will bring forward proposals to prohibit the deposit in the Library, or the insertion in the *Official Report*, of material from the chief executives and other officers of next steps agencies.

Mr. Newton: I have no plans to do so.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to publish the study prepared by the National Radiological Protection Board on the effects of radiation exposure to British service men in nuclear tests.

Mr. Hanley: The National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) published in 1988 a study of mortality and cancer among former participants in the British atmospheric nuclear test programme. A follow-up study has been undertaken by the NRPB and I understand that it hopes to publish it later this year. The timing of the publication is, of course, entirely a matter for the NRPB. I know of no new evidence, however, that would change the current position that the overall incidence of death and malignant disease has been no greater among nuclear test veterans than among the general population.

Yugoslavia

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage bonus has been paid to the crews of *(a)* foreign-registered and *(b)* United Kingdom-registered vessels chartered in the last 12 months to transport United Kingdom Army vehicles or personnel to the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Hanley: Payment of crew bonuses are made from the owners' account and we therefore have no records of percentages paid.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the seamen's unions with which he has had negotiations over the level of bonus paid to their members for the transport of United Kingdom Army personnel and military vehicles to the former Yugoslavia for United Nations peacekeeping purposes.

Mr. Hanley: My Department has had no such negotiations.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many foreign vessels have been chartered over the last 12 months to transport Army vehicles and personnel to the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Hanley: A total of 12 foreign-flagged ships have been chartered for this purpose during the last 12 months.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many British-flagged merchant vessels have been chartered by his Department over the last 12 months for the purpose of transporting Army personnel and military vehicles to the former Yugoslavia; and what rates have been paid for such chartered vessels.

Mr. Hanley: No British-flagged ships have been chartered for this purpose during the last 12 months. One British-flagged ship was offered but was not competitively priced.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent consideration he has given to declaring the former Yugoslav an operational theatre.

Mr. Hanley: The former Yugoslavia was declared an operational theatre on 20 May 1993.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what amount of money he estimates will be spent by his Department on military operations in the former Yugoslavia in *(a)* 1993-94 and *(b)* 1994-95.

Mr. Hanley: It is estimated that the extra cost to my Department of United Kingdom participation in military operations in the former Yugoslavia for the current financial year will amount to some £82,000,000, although in accordance with established arrangements we will be seeking reimbursement from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. No prediction can usefully be made for 1994-95 as this will depend on the level of our participation.

Explosive Devices

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of the explosive devices cleared from the north Gower marshes in 1992 were transported to Porton Down for decontamination.

Mr. Hanley: This is a matter for the chief executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment (CBDE) and I have asked him to reply.

Letter from Dr. Graham S. Pearson to Mr. Gareth Wardell, dated 14 June 1993:

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking how many of the explosive devices cleared from the North Gower marshes in 1992 were transported to Porton Down for decontamination (Question 11, Order

Paper, 8 June 1993) has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. A total of 29 explosive devices, all shells, suspected of containing or possibly containing materials requiring decontamination and disposal were transported to CBDE in 1992. It has since been confirmed that none contained chemical warfare agents.

Vanguard Submarine

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the first Vanguard submarine will be fully operational.

Mr. Aitken: The first Vanguard class submarine will enter operational service with the Royal Navy towards the end of 1994 or early in 1995.

Uranium Shells

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will institute an inquiry into the possibility of troops having been contaminated during the Gulf war as a result of the use of uranium-tipped shells; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: My Department has no evidence of members of the British armed forces who served in the Gulf conflict suffering from any unexplained symptoms which would call for such an inquiry. The health of all service personnel will of course continue to be monitored as a matter of routine.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what health checks have been carried out by his Department on MOD personnel who have *(a)* handled depleted uranium shells, *(b)* handled materials which have been struck by depleted uranium shells or *(c)* been exposed to material from detonated depleted uranium shells on British or NATO firing ranges at which British soldiers have trained.

Mr. Hanley: Health checks are carried out at the two test and evaluation ranges—Eskmeals and Kirkcudbright—where virtually all depleted uranium firing has taken place. At Eskmeals, health checks and radiation protection measures are fully in place to ensure that any contamination that might occur through the handling or firing of depleted uranium shells can be identified and dealt with quickly. At Kirkcudbright, exposure of staff to radiation is monitored on an individual basis.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what tests have been carried out for radioactivity *(a)* at British and NATO firing ranges at which British soldiers have changed or *(b)* the area surrounding such firing ranges where depleted uranium shells have been test fired; and if he will list the ranges and define the areas surrounding them;

(2) how many British and NATO ranges at which British soldiers have trained and areas surrounding them have been found to be contaminated by radioactivity from depleted uranium shells.

Mr. Hanley: Depleted uranium is not used by the British Army in peacetime training. Depleted uranium ammunition has however been test fired at three United Kingdom trials ranges—Eskmeals, West Freugh and Kirkcudbright—and soldiers have occasionally trained at all of these, although they no longer train at Kirkcudbright. Tests for radioactivity have been carried out at all three ranges as follows:

At Eskmeals, a regular programme of area monitoring has been undertaken since test firing started in 1980 and air, grass, water, animal faeces, foliage and dust samples analysed. In recent years the analysis has been done by the Atomic Energy Authority. Off-range monitoring is also carried out at two sites; at Welbank, three miles South East of the range, and Corney Fell, three miles to the East. Monitoring also covers the nearest centres of population.

At Kirkcudbright, soil, vegetation, seawater and silt samples are taken on a regular basis; analysis is carried out by BNFL and analysis is undertaken by the defence radiological protection service.

At West Freugh, the latest firing was in 1990 and a radiological survey was subsequently carried out by the Atomic Weapons Establishment of beach sand and seawater.

No detectable contamination has been found at West Freugh and only very low levels of radioactivity from depleted uranium ammunition have been detected at Eskmeals and Kirkcudbright. In both cases, the levels detected were well below anything which could be considered a health hazard either to those who work on the range or those who live near it.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many MOD personnel have been found to be contaminated with radioactivity from test-fired depleted uranium shells.

Mr. Hanley: At Eskmeals, no staff have been found to have been exposed to any level of radioactivity that would require investigation. At Kirkcudbright, no detectable exposures have been found.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the ranges *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* overseas at which the British armed forces have test fired depleted uranium armour-piercing shells.

Mr. Hanley: Since the programme was first authorised and announced to the House, *Official Report*, 8 March 1979, columns *777-78* and 25 January 1980, column *395*, all United Kingdom depleted uranium firings, with the exception of a few small calibre rounds trialed at test and experimental establishment (T&EE) West Freugh in 1988 and 1990, have taken place at either proof and experimental establishment Eskmeals or T&EE Kirkcudbright. The Ministry of Defence has test fired depleted uranium armour-piercing shells at White Sands, New Mexico and Aberdeen proving ground, Maryland in the United States and at Grammat in France.

Belize

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what reassessment he has made of his policy relating to the withdrawal of the British garrison from Belize as a result of recent events in Guatemala.

Mr. Hanley: Recent events in Guatemala have been of an internal nature and there is no evidence that Guatemala's attitude to relations with Belize has changed as a result. Whilst we are monitoring the situation, we see no reason to change our plans for the garrison.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what communications he has had with the Belize Government concerning recent events in Guatemala.

Mr. Hanley: Prime Minister Price visited the United Kingdom on 9 and 10 June and had discusisons with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and my hon. Friend the Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Recent events in Guatemala were among the subjects discussed.

Conventional Forces in Europe

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he has given to the negotiation of further reductions in conventional forces in Europe.

Mr. Hanley: There are no current plans for further negotiations on reductions in conventional forces in Europe. The immediate priority is to ensure that the force level reductions in the conventional forces in Europe treaty are properly implemented.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 12 May, *Official Report*, column *522*, if he will provide details of the teething difficulties that have occurred with the practice inspections that have been carried out as part of the preparation for the conventional forces in Europe treaty.

Mr. Hanley: Most of the difficulties encountered so far during practice CFE inspections have concerned minor differences of interpretation of procedures such as the standard of site diagrams to be produced.

Helicopter Landing Ship

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he gave to the need to retain a viable and effective defence industry when making his recent decision about the procurement of the helicopter landing ship.

Mr. Aitken: The need to retain a viable and effective defence industry was carefully taken into account in reaching the decision.

Tornado

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 27 April, *Official Report*, column *394*, if he will state the number and nature of the problems identified during a recent modification programme on Tornado aircraft; and if he will provide details of the financial consequences of these problems.

Mr. Aitken: Evidence of structural damage to a number of Tornado aircraft modified by Airwork Ltd. has led the Ministry of Defence to terminate the relevant contract on grounds of substantial failure of performance by the contractor. My Department intends to claim against Airwork for the rectification and consequential costs arising from the company's failure to execute the modification contract properly. Assembling all the relevant evidence, which includes the details requested, and determining the amount of the claim will take some time.

Army Officers

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) of 21 April, *Official Report*, column *133*, what percentage of the total number of officers has been commissioned from the ranks for each regiment in the British Army.

Mr. Hanley: I will write to the hon. Member.

Married Quarters

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 31 March, *Official Report*, column *197*, what progress has been made in the establishment of a non-profit-making housing trust; and what representations he has received on this matter.

Mr. Hanley: Good progress has been made. My Department has now engaged the services of Major General (Retired) J. F. J. Johnston CB CBE, to act as a consultant to the Department as the chairman (designate) of the embryo housing trust. In broad terms, his task will be to develop an organisation which would be capable of receiving the married quarters estate from the Department and providing a housing service to meet the requirements of the services. This will provide the opportunity to develop a coherent long-term policy for the Department's married quarters estate.

My Department has received no representations on the matter since 31 March.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for defence, pursuant to his answer of 22 April, *Official Report*, column *193*, on how many occasions in the last year negotiations with housing associations relating to the sale of married quarters have been terminated due to the inability of housing associations to secure the necessary funding.

Mr. Hanley: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the housing associations that have purchased MOD married quarters, and the housing associations that have expressed an interest in the purchase of MOD married quarters.

Mr. Hanley: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

Forces Dwellings

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many dwellings owned by his Ministry were unoccupied on *(a)* 31 March 1992 and *(b)* 31 March 1991; how many of these were either undergoing or awaiting major maintenance work or modernisation; how many were already allocated to service families; how many were in the process of being sold; and how many were being held for agreed deployments.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

	31 March 1992	31 March 1991
Married Quarters		
Unoccupied	9,364	10,111
Undergoing or awaiting major maintenance or modernisation	2,829	3,675
Allocated to Service families	2,255	1,569
Held for agreed deployments	290	337
MOD Civilian Houses		
Unoccupied	140	170

A breakdown into the above categories is not available for the MOD civilian houses.

In addition, 1,816 former married quarters were in the process of being sold on 31 March 1992 and 1,864 on 31 March 1991. Figures for the number of vacant MOD civilian houses in the process of being sold on these dates are not available.

Tank and Naval Ammunition

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath of 17 May, *Official Report*, column *82*, on what dates he intends to announce his decisions concerning the tenders for tank and naval ammunition.

Mr. Aitken: The tenders are currently being assessed and an announcement will be made within the next few months.

Rapid Reaction Corps

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what details of national contributions to the ACE rapid reaction corps have been finalised; and what details have yet to be finalised.

Mr. Hanley: The outline structure of the ACE rapid reaction corps was published in the 1992 Statement on the Defence Estimates. In addition to the HQ framework, the United Kingdom will assign the 1st UK Armoured Division, 3rd (UK) Division, and combat service support for both these divisions. The United Kingdom will also assign 24 Airmobile brigade to the multinational division (Central) (MND(C)), together with a contribution to the divisional HQ and communications elements. The German, Dutch and Belgian Governments have also agreed to assign brigades to the MND(C). The Greek, Turkish and Italian Governments have provisionally agreed to assign brigades to the multinational division (South).

On current plans, six nations will also provide a division if required; these are: Germany, Italy, Turkey, Greece, the United States and Spain. Other contributions are also under consideration, and details will be clarified as part of the normal NATO force planning cycle.

Military Information (Exchanges)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 12 May, *Official Report*, column *522*, whether he will place copies of the exchanges of military information resulting from the 1990 Vienna document and its successor in the Library.

Mr. Hanley: It was agreed during negotiations that information exchanged under the 1990 and 1992 Vienna documents should be for official use only. I am, however, arranging for the United Kingdom returns for 1991, 1992 and 1993 to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

D-Notices

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Cunninghame North (Mr. Wilson) of 21 April, *Official Report*, column *133*, what consideration has been given to the progress of the D-notice review.

Mr. Hanley: I understand that the Defence, Press and Broadcasting Committee met on 6 May and had preliminary discussions on the review of the D notice system, announced by my predecessor on 26 October 1992, *Official Report*, columns *509-10*, which is now well in hand; and that it plans to meet again in July to consider a draft report of the review.

Iraq

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 30 March, *Official Report*, column *175*, if he will make a statement on the performance of the defence intelligence staff in its provision of assessments relating to *(a)* Iraqi defence policies, *(b)* Iraqi intentions and *(c)* Iraqi military capabilities.

Mr. Hanley: The Defence intelligence staff (DIS) had been monitoring the development of Iraqi military capabilities and defence policies for some time. The build-up of Iraqi forces on the Kuwait border in late July 1990 was recognised as a major escalation although there was no information on the precise intentions of Saddam Hussein to determine the timing of the hostilities. The availability of a comprehensive intelligence data base on Iraqi military capabilities, to which the DIS contributed significantly, was an important factor in the coalition effort.

Gulf War

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what immediate actions he is taking to implement the recommendations of the National Audit Office report on movements of personnel, equipment and stores to and from the Gulf (HC 693).

Mr. Hanley: The National Audit Office's (NAO) work builds on extensive earlier studies by my Department including a detailed internal audit report of the lessons of Operation Granby. As the NAO report acknowledges, the Department has already instituted changes to procedures and has taken initiatives to introduce new systems, which will greatly reduce the movement problems identified for a large-scale out-of-area deployment.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what reports he has received on the role of British military forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina in safeguarding the property and lives of Croats coming under attack from muslim forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: British forces undertook a recent mission, on request from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees

(UNHCR), to help evacuate some 186 people—mostly Croat women and children—from a church at the village of Guca Gora in central Bosnia, which was coming under small arms and mortar fire. During the evacuation, which was completed successfully, the soldiers themselves came under fire and returned fire in self-defence.

FR Aviation

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for defence what electronic warfare training services are provided by FR Aviation for the Royal Navy and at what cost; and what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the service provided.

Mr. Hanley: FR Aviation holds the current contract for the provision of various electronic warfare services for the Royal Navy, mainly concerned with threat simulation and communications jamming. The contract price is a matter of commercial confidentiality. The effectiveness of the service is kept under review under the terms of the contract.

RAF Electronic Warfare Training

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which airspace areas will be used for RAF electronic warfare training; how the costs of any additional transit flying by contractors' aircraft will be met; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Electronic warfare (EW) training for RAF aircraft may take place anywhere in the United Kingdom air defence region. Under the proposal to contractorise EW training the amount of transit flying will depend on the contractor's choice of airbase, and is a factor which has been taken into account during the tender evaluation. As officials from my Department are in the final stages of tender selection, it would not be appropriate to give any further details.

US Bases

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the United States bases in England to which the provisions of the Visiting Forces Act 1952 or the provisions of the NATO status of forces agreement of June 1952 apply.

Mr. Hanley: The Visiting Forces Act 1952 and the NATO status of forces agreement apply to all United States visiting forces in the United Kingdom. The full list of United States bases and facilities in England is as follows:

RAF Alconbury
RAF Barford St. John
RAF Barkway
RAF Bentwaters
RAF Bicester
Botley Hill
Bovingdon
RAF Burtonwood
RAF Chelveston
RAF Chicksands
RAF Chilwell
Christmas Common
Coldblow
RAF Croughton
Daventry
Dunkirk
Eastcote
RAF Fairford
Felixstowe
RAF Feltwell
Framlingham
High Wycombe Air Station
RAF Hythe
RAF Lakenheath
RAF Little Rissington
London USN Europe HQ
Marchwood
Menwith Hill Station
RAF Mildenhall
RAF Molesworth
RAF Nocton Hall
RAF Oakhanger
Oakington
RAF Ruislip
RAF Spadeadam
RAF St. Mawgan
RAF Swingate
RAF Upper Heyford
RAF Upwood
RAF Uxbridge
RAF Watton
RAF Welford
West Ruislip
RAF Woodbridge

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 15 June 1993

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Illegal Immigrants

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether monitoring of gangmasters by his Department includes control of employment of illegal immigrants; and how many cases have been discovered in the last year.

Mr. Jack: The role of MAFF in monitoring aspects of gangmasters' activities is restricted to ensuring compliance with the terms of the Agricultural Wages Order made under the Agricultural Wages Act 1948.

Land Use (Surveillance)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if reports on aerial surveillance undertaken with satellite equipment in the years 1991-92 to establish the usage or non-usage of land are to be made publicly available.

Mr. Jack: The year 1991-92 was a trial year organised by the Commission. The ownership of the work resides with the Commission, and we understand that it does not intend to publish the results.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what organisations of persons are responsible for the surveillance of agricultural land for the purpose of determining usage in the United Kingdom and in the member states.

Mr. Jack: Each member state is responsible for undertaking the control measures within its territory for the checking of aid applications.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the arrangements for the surveillance of agricultural land for the purpose of determining usage are equally applied throughout the European Community.

Mr. Jack: The EC regulations governing the integrated administration and control system (IACS) require all member states, without differentiation, to carry out administrative checks on aid applications, supplemented by on-farm checks on a sample of holdings.

Integrated Administration and Control System

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which member states of the EEC completed the process of obtaining IACS information by 16 May.

Mr. Jack: The EC regulation governing the integrated administration and control system (IACS) provided for all member states to set a deadline of no later than 15 May for receipt of the completed IACS applications this year. Where applications are received after the deadline, the farmers will have their aid payments reduced under a formula set out in the relevant EC regulation. These same rules apply, of course, in all 12 member states. We do not have information on the number of applications received after 15 May in each member state.

Set-aside Payments

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to what extent it is possible to link the amounts and scale of set-aside payments to environmental and social improvements involving *(a)* management of hedgerows, *(b)* protection of unsprayed headland, *(c)* reductions in the use of nitrogen, *(d)* the planting of trees, *(e)* the creation of wildlife habitats, *(f)* attractive landscapes and *(g)* the provision of new footpaths and bridlepaths; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The EC rules of the arable area payments scheme require member states to apply appropriate environmmental measures to set-aside land. The United Kingdom rules for set-aside include the maintenance of hedgerows and other environmental features and restrictions on the use of sprays and fertilisers. We expect to introduce non-rotational set-aside later this year which will allow greater opportunity for the creation of wildlife habitats and we are pressing strongly for the Community rules to encourage tree planting on set-aside land. There is at present no scope under EC rules to vary the set-aside payment. However, under the agri-environment programme we are considering a voluntary scheme to make additional payments to farmers who provide public access on suitable set-aside land.

Viral Haemorrhagic Disease

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps the Government are taking to ensure that there are suitable vaccines to treat viral haemorrhagic disease.

Mr. Soames: A product licence application for a rabbit viral haemorrhagic disease vaccine was submitted and subsequently withdrawn during 1992. Although officials in the veterinary medicines directorate are actively pursuing discussions with that applicant and with other pharmaceutical companies, no further application has been received. The decision on whether to submit an application is a commercial one for the companies concerned, bearing in mind the likely size of the market.

Equine Viral Arteritis

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action she is taking to arrest and cure the outbreak of equine viral arteritis in the United Kingdom; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring) on 10 June at columns 307-8.

Chernobyl

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what experiments are being conducted by her Department into the use of ammonium ferric

hexacyanoferrate in order to fix caesium-137 from the Chernobyl radioactive fall-out in the soil and to prevent its take-up by growing plants.

Mr. Soames: Studies to evaluate the potential of a number of chemical treatments, including ammonium ferric hexacyanoferrate, for reducing radiocaesium in the vegetation of upland pastures are being carried out on two sites, one in Cumbria and one in Wales, as part of the Department's programme of post-Chernobyl research and development.

Agriculture Council

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Agriculture Council held in Luxembourg on 14 June.

Mrs. Shephard: I represented the United Kingdom at the meeting of the Agriculture Council on 14 June.

The Council formally adopted the legal texts implementing the package of farm prices and related measures which it had agreed at its May meeting.

The Council also discussed a number of other proposed measures, without reaching agreement. These included a proposal on the definition and designation of butter and other fats, which I criticised as being unnecessarily elaborate and prescriptive; and a proposed directive on minced meat and other meat preparations, on which my main aim is to avoid excessively strict criteria that would put at risk traditional British products. The Council will have to return to these proposals at a later meeting.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Divorce Law

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what action he proposes to take on Law Commission report 192, "Grounds for Divorce."

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor is considering the Law Commission's recommendations for reform of divorce law. His review of these matters is not yet complete and he has no immediate plans for legislation. He continues to welcome views on the Law Commission's recommendations, and will consult further before any measures on this subject are introduced.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to review the administration of divorce law.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor is considering divorce law reform as part of the rolling programme of review of family law and business. His review of these matters, including the administration of divorce law, is not yet complete.

Legal Aid

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will immediately take steps to secure a significantly reduced rate of interest payable by those owing statutory charges under the legal aid scheme.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor will shortly be laying before Parliament a statutory instrument designed to reduce the rate of simple interest levied on postponed payment of the statutory charge from 10·5 per cent. to 8 per cent.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Departmental Buildings

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the buildings currently owned or rented by his Department, together with *(a)* the estimated value, *(b)* the annual rent and *(c)* the annual maintenance cost of each building in the current financial year.

Mr. Nelson: The Treasury does not own any property. All Treasury accommodation is on the common user estate, which is owned by the Crown and administered by Property Holdings. The present value of the common user estate is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The accommodation charges and contributions towards maintenance which the Treasury pays to Property Holdings and the Treasury's own maintenance costs in respect of buildings occupied by the Treasury are given in the table:

Estimated expenditure for 1993-94

	Accommodation charge £	*Contribution towards maintenance* £	*Maintenance by Treasury* £
Government offices Great George street, London SW1	6,270,431	1,471,213	343,369
11 Downing street, London SW1	139,359	43,885	5,500
Alencon Link, Basingstoke	202,977	48,698	1,200

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what talks he has had with his European Community and G7 counterparts about the future of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In the short period since becoming Chancellor and, subsequently, United Kingdom Governor of the EBRD, I have had no talks with European Community or G7 partners about the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. However, my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development has had contacts with her counterparts in other countries. My senior officials have had a number of contacts as well.

Pensions

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will estimate the amount of the public sector pensions payable in each of as many future years as are available, assuming annual inflation at the current rate of 2 per cent.;

(2) if he will list for as many of the forthcoming years as are available the percentage of forecast gross domestic product that will be allocated to public sector pensions.

Mr. Portillo: The most recent estimates of public sector pension scheme liabilities and the costs of public service pension scheme benefits were contained in the answers given by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security on 7 June at column *140* and by me on 8 June at column *200*.

Projections of those estimates for future years are not available and would require a substantial amount of actuarial calculation. However, many of the public service pension schemes are approaching maturity in pension terms. Accordingly, it is not expected that there will be an increasing demand on the economy in real terms. In the longer term, with the reduction in the number of employees in the public sector, it is to be expected that public sector pension costs will reduce in real terms.

Student Accommodation

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if student accommodation which is *(a)* institutionally-owned or *(b)* institutionally-managed will be classified as domestic for VAT purposes;

(2) whether institutionally-owned and institutionally-managed student accommodation will be exempt from paying VAT on fuel bills.

Sir John Cope: Student accommodation which is institutionally owned or institutionally managed is classified as domestic for VAT purposes. Such accommodation will not be exempt from VAT on fuel bills.

"Summary of Companies"

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many copies of his Department's publication "Summaries of Companies" included in the HM Treasury index of management consultants dated May 1993, have been published; at what cost; to whom it has been distributed; and what criteria were used in deciding *(a)* to whom it has been sent and *(b)* which data were included in the report.

Sir John Cope: About 100 copies of this reference book are produced for internal use at a cost of £7·17 each. The book, which is not published, is produced as an aid to those senior staff in Departments and agencies who are considering the hire and use of consultants.

It contains summary information on the firms on the Treasury's index of management consultants.

Negative Income Tax

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will now review the case for the introduction of a negative income tax.

Mr. Dorrell: We have no plans to introduce a negative income tax. The reforms of the social security system in the 1980s improved the interaction between tax and benefit systems. We keep both systems under review.

Income Tax

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the change in revenue in a full year of replacing the present rates and thresholds of income tax with a structure in which *(a)* the first £2,500 incurred tax at 20 per cent., *(b)* £2,500 to £30,000 at 25 per cent., *(c)* £30,000 to £60,000 at 40 per cent., *(d)* £60,000 to £100,000 at 50 per cent. and *(e)* over £100,000 at 60 per cent., while retaining the existing levels of personal allowances.

Mr. Dorrell: The estimated revenue yield in a full year at 1993-94 income levels from imposition of the specified regime is £570 million.

Book Purchase

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the Inland Revenue will obtain a copy of the book, details of which have been submitted to him.

Mr. Dorrell: The Inland Revenue gathers information, including published material, which may be relevant to the correct assessment of tax liabilities. Because of its duty of confidentiality the Inland Revenue is not able to comment on its dealings with particular taxpayers.

Overseas Assets

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the mechanisms by which the Inland Revenue checks on companies' compliance with requirements on valuation of overseas assets.

Mr. Dorrell: The Inland Revenue uses considerable resources on the technical review and investigation of company accounts. The largest companies and those whose affairs are particularly complex are dealt with in offices which specialise in such cases, which have enough staff to review their tax affairs in depth, and which are headed by some of the Department's most senior inspectors. Reviews cover all aspects of companies' accounts and expert advice is available to the inspectors from head office specialists in international issues.

Investments overseas will be monitored as part of this process of review and the valuation of assets abroad will be considered in so far as it may have a bearing on United Kingdom tax liabilities.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* voluntary organisations and *(c)* universities are paying value added tax on courses of further education for adults; and if he will list the liable courses.

Sir John Cope: The information is not centrally available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The subject matter of courses is only one of a number of factors affecting VAT liability and each case is determined on its own facts.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the terms of reference of the review that Customs and Excise are currently undertaking into value added tax in the education and training sector; when the review is due to be completed; and if he will list those bodies being consulted as part of the review process.

Sir John Cope: Customs and Excise is carrying out an internal review to examine whether, within the constraints of European Community VAT legislation, there is scope for simplification and rationalisation of the current VAT reliefs for education and training services. Customs expect to be reporting to Ministers in two to three months. If changes in law or administration are considered appropriate, those likely to be affected will be consulted before final proposals are brought forward.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue was obtained from VAT charges on courses of *(a)* education, *(b)* training, *(c)* sports activity and *(d)* leisure activity in each year since 1987; and how much it costs each year to administer the collection of these charges.

Sir John Cope: This information is not centrally available and it would not be possible to provide an estimate without disproportionate cost.

Business Enterprise Scheme

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will estimate the cost of tax relief for BES in the years 1992-93 and 1993-94 for schemes involving private housing where individuals obtain loans connected with the shareholdings they acquire through BES;

(2) if he will estimate the total cost of tax relief for business expansion schemes in the years 1992-93 and 1993-94, with the cost in each year of relief involving private rented housing.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 14 June 1993]:* The provisional estimate of the total cost of income tax relief for 1992-93 is £380 million. The cost for 1993-94 will depend on the levels of business expansion scheme investments and is very tentatively estimated at about £180 million. It is not possible at present to provide a reliable subdivision of these estimates by type of investment, though information published in the specialist press about loan-linked investments in 1992-93 imply that these may amount to some £250 million of revenue cost.

Industrial Building Allowance Trusts

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list, for each enterprise zone and former enterprise zone, the number of industrial building allowance trusts accepted for capital allowance purposes; and what is the square footage of *(a)* industrial and *(b)* commercial floor space covered in each IBA trust.

Sir George Young: I have been asked to reply. Neither my own Department nor Inland Revenue maintains such records and the information could be secured only at disproportionate cost.

HOME DEPARTMENT

National Association of Probation Officers

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met representatives of the National Association of Probation Officers; what matters were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Neither my right hon. and learned Friend nor I have yet met representatives of the National Association of Probation Officers. I hope to do so before too long.

Corrections Corporation of America

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total cost incurred as a result of the decision to investigate the performance and record of the Corrections Corporation of America.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the prison service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. John McAllion, dated 15 June 1993.

INVESTIGATION INTO THE CCA

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the cost incurred as a result of the decision to investigate the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA). The Prisons Service Board asked Mr. Bentley, one of our non executive directors, to visit America to investigate the CCA's suitability to be involved in managing prisons in this country. He was accompanied by a member of staff from Prison Service headquarters. Twenty three people were interviewed during the investigation in several locations in the United States. The substantive costs therefore comprise the travelling, accommodation and other expenses incurred during the visit. These total £9,574.

Wheel Clamping

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to announce proposals to regulate private wheel clamping.

Mr. Maclean: A public consultation exercise on this issue has recently been completed and we are now analysing the very many responses. We will announce our conclusions as soon as possible.

Police (Assaults)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the reported number of assaults on police officers serving in each of the Metropolitan police divisions during the course of their police duties during 1992.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is contained in the table:

Division	*Ident.*	*Number of assaults*
Barkingside	(JB)	44
Barnet and Hertsmere	(SA)	31
Battersea	(WA)	32
Belgravia	(AB)	31
Bethnal Green	(HB)	49
Bexleyheath	(RY)	30

Division	Ident.	Number of assaults
Brixton	(LD)	68
Bromley	(PR)	36
Carter Street	(MS)	27
Catford	(PD)	68
Charing Cross	(CX)	62
Chelsea	(BC)	20
Chingford	(JC)	46
Chiswick	(TC)	32
Clapham	(LM)	37
Croydon	(ZD)	40
Dagenham	(KG)	55
Ealing	(XD)	83
Edmonton	(YE)	44
Epsom and Sutton	(ZP)	62
Forest Gate	(KW)	76
Fulham	(FF)	33
Golders Green	(SG)	13
Greenwich	(RG)	47
Hackney	(GH)	111
Hammersmith	(FH)	69
Hampstead	(EH)	27
Harrow	(QA)	65
Harrow Road	(DR)	54
Havering	(KD)	62
Heathrow Airport	(ID)	8
Hillingdon	(XU)	54
Holborn	(EO)	41
Holloway	(NH)	52
Hornsey	(YR)	69
Hounslow	(TD)	45
Ilford	(JI)	35
Islington	(ND)	74
Kennington	(LK)	31
Kensington	(BD)	28
Kentish Town	(EK)	34
Kilburn	(QK)	93
Kingston	(VK)	37
Leman Street	(HD)	40
Lewisham	(PL)	34
Leyton	(JL)	82
Limehouse	(HH)	83
Marylebone	(DM)	27
Merton	(VW)	41
Notting Hill	(BH)	54
Orpington	(PN)	27
Paddington Green	(DD)	21
Peckham	(MM)	51
Plaistow	(KO)	62
Plumstead	(RA)	61
Ponders End	(YF)	79
Richmond	(TW)	37
South Norwood	(ZN)	86
Southall	(XS)	45
Southwark	(MD)	57
Spelthorne	(TG)	28
Stoke Newington	(GN)	119
Streatham	(LS)	46
Tooting	(WD)	21
Tottenham	(YT)	75
Wandsworth	(WW)	38
Wembley	(QD)	48
West End Central	(CD)	94
West Hendon	(SV)	41

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women convicted of assaults on police officers in each of the Metropolitan police divisions during 1992; and what penalties were imposed of (a) imprisonment, (b) fines and (c) probation.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information for 1991, the last available year, is contained in the following table:

	Men	Women
Convicted	1,404	227
Fined	775	102
Probation	53	13
Imprisonment	117	2

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of days lost by *(a)* men and *(b)* women police officers serving in each of the Metropolitan police divisions as a result of physical assault on them during the course of their police duties during the year 1992.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The numbers of days lost per division of the Metropolitan police due to assaults are as follows:

Division	Men	Women
Belgravia	98	—
Chelsea	118	28
Kensington	91	—
Notting Hill	74	2
West End Central	83	53
Charing Cross	65	33
Paddington Green	166	—
Marylebone	24	6
Harrow	42	37
Hampstead	76	—
Kentish Town	10	—
Fulham	87	—
Hammersmith	24	11
Hackney	18	42
Stoke Newington	107	—
Bethnal Green	35	6
Leman Street	19	6
Limehouse	111	8
Heathrow Airport	1	1
Chingford	19	—
Chigwell	177	—
Ilford	165	10
Leyton	28	64
Barking	4	45
Dagenham	162	—
North Woolwich	140	41
Brixton	39	—
Kennington	17	77
Clapham	—	24
Streatham	16	5
Southwark	59	2
Peckham	210	—
Carter Street	118	—
Holloway	—	4
Islington	154	22
Catford	26	—
Penge	10	—
Brockley	—	24
Lewisham	39	73
Orpington	96	—
Deptford	66	—
Bromley	41	39
Sydenham	—	—
Harrow	153	—
Wembley	15	—
Harlesden	416	—
Kilburn	521	117
Plumstead	97	6
Greenwich	7	—
Bexleyheath	251	—
Barnet and Hertsmere	79	—
West Hendon	8	2
Chiswick	52	—
Hounslow	16	16
Spelthorne	29	7
Twickenham	10	7
Kingston	135	—

Division	Men	Women
Battersea	36	20
Tooting	60	39
Wandsworth	44	—
Ealing	286	132
Hillingdon	41	31
Southall	41	11
Edmonton	18	—
Ponders End	21	18
Hornsey	75	—
Tottenham	127	77
Croydon	20	20
Wimbledon	409	2
South Norwood	80	23
Epsom and Sutton	248	15

Carl Bridgewater Case

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from Mr. Tim O'Malley concerning the Carl Bridgewater case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: A letter from Mr. O'Malley dated 21 September 1992 which expressed doubts about the safety of the convictions in this case was considered as part of the review, the conclusions of which my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) announced on 3 February 1993. I received a further letter from Mr. O'Malley on 6 June, which I will consider together with other additional representations that I have recently received about this case.

Probation and Bail Hostels

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of vacancies at probation or bail hostels covering the Greater London area on 31 May.

Mr. Maclean: As at 31 May 1993 there were a total of 117 vacancies at approved probation/bail and bail hostels in the Greater London area.

Prisons

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether in-house bids will be permitted for the running of new prisons.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The current policy is not to invite in-house bids for the management of new prisons. In the case of Doncaster, which is the last of the current prison building programme, the prison board decided that it did not wish to make an in-house bid and that there was, therefore, no reason to change the current policy. This is to enable the prison service to focus its resources on developing the best possible bids for existing establishments. No decision has been made about the policy on in-house bids for any new prisons which might be built in the future.

Prison Service

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the performance targets for the prison service for the year 1993-94.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by the then Home Secretary, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke), to my right hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) on 1 April 1993 at column *387*.

Manchester Prison

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether all staff will have the right to transfer to the new employer if the contract for Manchester prison is awarded to an outside tenderer; and what will be the position of any employees who decline to be transferred.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the prison service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 14 June 1993.

MARKET TESTING OF HMP MANCHESTER

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the position of staff working at Manchester Prison.

We have given an undertaking that, in the event of a private operator winning the contract, mobile staff at Manchester will have the option of re-deployment elsewhere in the Prison Service. In the case of non-mobile staff we have undertaken to explore the possibilities of re-deployment in the Prison Service or elsewhere in Government service but cannot guarantee that this will prove possible. Mobile staff who have not opted for re-deployment will transfer automatically to the new employer, as will non-mobile staff who have requested re-deployment but for whom such opportunities cannot be found.

Prison Service (Parliamentary Questions)

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many written replies the chief executive of the prison service issued in response to parliamentary questions during the period 1 April to 28 April; and what was the approximate cost of each letter.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the prison service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 14 June 1993.

I have been asked by the Home Secretary to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about Questions I have answered.

I sent 50 written replies in response to Questions put down for answer between 1 April and 28 April, inclusive. Costings for individual replies are not recorded. The average cost of preparing written replies to Questions across the Government service, including the Prison Service, is currently estimated at £94 per written reply.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will make available to hon. Members a copy of the report published at the meeting of EC Home Affairs Ministers in Copenhagen on 1 June which details levels of persecution in states throughout the world; and what plans he has to use the report as a guideline for immigration officials as to which countries can be deemed safe for the return of asylum seekers.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Ministers took note at the meeting in Copenhagen on 1 June of a report from the Centre for Information, Discussion and Exchange on Asylum (CIREA). I am placing a copy in the Library.

Strip Searches

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to review the procedures when intimate and strip searches take place of juveniles held in police custody so as to ensure that either a parent, relative or friend is present; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We shall shortly be seeking the views of the Association of Chief Police Officers on a number of issues relating to the conduct of intimate and strip searches.

Work Permits

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action his Department is proposing to take to ensure farmers and gangmasters do not employ non-EC persons who do not possess a work permit.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The immigration service works closely with the police and other agencies to detect and deal with people committing offences under the immigration laws, including those working without authority.

Correspondence

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now reply to the letters of 5 April, 21 April and 6 May sent to his predecessor by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Mr. Gallagher, an inmate at Lancaster prison.

Mr. Maclean: I understand that the director general of the prison service replied on 14 June to the right hon. Member's letter of 5 April about Mr. Gallagher's treatment in prison. As my right hon. and learned Friend's assistant private secretary explained in her letter of 9 June, we are making some inquiries in order to be in a position to send a substantive reply to the right hon. Member's letters of 21 April and 6 May about the safety of Mr. Gallagher's conviction.

Yugoslavia (Detainees)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimates he has received of the numbers of ex-detainees in the former Yugoslavia eligible for admission to the United Kingdom, with their dependants, under the scheme he announced last November.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Placement under the scheme that I announced last November is dependent on nomination by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. A number of other countries are running similar programmes and I understand that nearly all ex-detainees currently in UNHCR's care in Croatia have now been placed. The International Committee of the Red Cross is currently visiting some 2,400 detainees in Bosnia whose release it hopes to negotiate.

DEFENCE

Swan Hunter

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline the nature of the discussions being held between his Department and the receiver of Swan Hunter as to the completion of the three frigates building at the yard; and whether it is his preferred solution for the frigates to be completed at the yard subject to the satisfactory conclusion of the negotiations with the receiver.

Mr. Aitken: Completion of the three type 23 Frigates on Tyneside would be my preferred solution, provided that a satisfactory agreement can be reached with the receiver. The details of the current negotiations are commercially confidential; they include financial and contractual matters.

Channel Islands (Nazi Occupation)

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the release of further documents relating to the wartime Nazi occupation of the Channel Islands; and what inspection of these documents has been undertaken by representatives of the German authorities.

Mr. Hanley: The majority of MOD documents relating to the wartime Nazi occupation of the Channel Islands are already in the public domain. The German authorities are examining all MOD documents relating to this matter. When they have completed this task, those files currently closed will be opened for public inspection at the Public Record Office.

Upholder Class Submarines

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the cost of moving the Upholder class of submarine from Gosport to Devonport.

Mr. Hanley: A total of £100,000 has been spent so far, and a further sum is contractually committed. No more expenditure will be approved until a decision has been taken on the future of the Upholder class.

Defence Research Agency

Sir James Spicer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what targets he has set for the Defence Research Agency in 1993-94.

Mr. Aitken: The targets recently set for the Defence Research Agency in 1993-94 and subsequent years are as follows:

(a) To meet profit and cash targets consistent with a 6 per cent. return on capital employed (ROCE).
(b) To improve overall utilisation from 40 per cent. in 1992-93 to 49 per cent. in 1993-94 and 52 per cent. in 1997-98.
(c) To reduce administrative and general overhead (AGO) expressed as a percentage of total variable costs to less than 15 per cent. in 1993-94 and to hold it at this level or better in following years.
(d) To seek competitive proposals in 1993-94 for market testing amounting on an annual basis to 5 per cent. of DRA's turnover, for secondary competition amounting to 3 per cent. of turnover, and for subcontracts amounting to 24 per cent. of DRA's turnover.

(e) To achieve 70 per cent. of customer milestones on time in 1993-94 and to increase this to 85 per cent. by 1997-98.
(f) To achieve an increase of 2 per cent. in overall performance and customer satisfaction in 1993-94 (as measured by the sum of satisfaction criteria in the business planning survey).
(g) To achieve a running cost reduction of £38 million per annum in 1993-94 and to achieve the final target of £90 million by 1997-98.
(h) To achieve formal quality certification to BS5750 for one sector by 31 December 1994, and for the rest of the DRA by 31 December 1966.

HMS Sovereign

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what timescale he has for the return to service of HMS Sovereign, of what other vessels the officer in command of HMS Sovereign is also in command; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley *[pursuant to his answer, 8 June 1993, col. 225-26.]:* The answer I gave on 8 June should have read as follows:

HMS Sovereign is expected to return to service in 1995. The refitting officer in command of HMS Sovereign is also in command of HMS Revenge, which is in the process of being decommissioned.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Product Marking

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how his Department will be participating at the Copenhagen European conference in June on labelling products; and which United Kingdom good practices in the labelling of products he will submit to the European Commission study of this issue.

Mr. McLoughlin: My Department was represented by an official from consumer affairs division. The conduct of the study is a matter for the European Commission but we understand that it will be identifying priorities, and considering how best to bring consumer and trade interests together to assist in the process. My Department will aim to keep in touch with developments, co-operate fully in this work and ensure the European Commission is aware of current United Kingdom practices.

Developing Countries

Mr. Barnes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what measures he proposes to take to help increase the trading prospects of developing countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The Government will continue to support strenuously the European Community's efforts, particularly in the current GATT Uruguay round negotiations, to create open trading conditions which will increase the trading prospects of all countries, including developing nations. An OECD study suggested that annual income gains to the developing world as a whole from a Uruguay round agreement could be in excess of $US 90 billion, once all the effects have worked through. Under its generalised system of preferences (GSP) scheme the European Community allows preferential access to most of the manufactured products from developing countries. The GSP provides especially generous treatment for the least developed nations. The trade provisions of the Lomé convention also provide unlimited duty free access (subject to rules of origin) to Community markets for all industrial products (except rum), and free or concessionary access for a wide range of agricultural products, from the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states. Lomé beneficiaries financed from the European development fund (EDF) can also write into their national indicative programmes requirements for technical and structural adjustment aid which will benefit their export regimes.

The United Kingdom also actively participates in the United Nations conference on trade and development (UNCTAD) and other relevant international forums which encourage developing countries in their own efforts towards sustained economic development.

Office of Electricity Regulation

Mr. Mullin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many people are employed by OFFER; what is their function; and what is the annual cost.

Mr. Eggar: Total staff in post at the Office of Electricity Regulation (OFFER) in December 1992 was 224. This figure includes staff working on consumer and public affairs, legal and technical matters, administration and in the regional offices. The duties of the Director General of Electricity Supply, who heads OFFER, include the regulation of the electricity market and the protection of consumers. The cost of running OFFER in the financial year ending March 1992 was £10·5 million. OFFER's costs are recovered from annual fees paid by licensees.

Oil and Gas

Mr. Richards: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what measures are being taken to ensure that those companies which receive the right to drill offshore under the 14th round of oil and gas licensing do so in an environmentally responsible manner; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Special conditions to protect wildlife and the environment are attached to licence awards. These conditions are agreed with other Government Departments and the Joint Nature Conservancy Committee (JNCC).

Gasoline

Mr. Legg: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what changes to gasoline composition have occurred in the United Kingdom since 1970;

(2) what is the level of aromatic hydrocarbons in the super premium unleaded grade and the unleaded premium grade of gasoline in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: The information is not held centrally.

Deregulation Unit

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received from the civil service unions about the work of the deregulation unit.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I am not aware of any such representations.

British and Commonwealth Company

Mr. Radice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to publish his Department's report into the collapse of the British and Commonwealth Company.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Inspectors were appointed on 15 June 1990 under section 432 of the Companies Act 1985 to investigate and report on the affairs of Atlantic Computers plc and Atlantic Computer Systems plc, both major companies in the British and Commonwealth group. The inspectors are in the final stages of their investigations but they have not yet submitted their report; I will consider publication when it is received.

Overseas Assets

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement outlining his Department's responsibilities in respect of investigating companies' compliance with United Kingdom accounting requirements on valuation of overseas assets.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: A company's compliance with the United Kingdom accounting requirements on the valuation of overseas assets is a matter for the directors and auditors. Where evidence was presented suggesting that without good reason the relevant statutory accounting requirements had not been applied, appropriate inquiries would be considered in the normal way.

Brewing Industry

Mr. Wareing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 8 June, if he will list the exclusive supply agreements in the brewing industry which have received exemption from article 85 of the treaty of Rome.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 11 June 1993]:* Since 1983, supply agreements operated by the brewing industry have been able to gain automatic exemption from article 85 of the treaty of Rome by complying with the provisions of EC regulation 1984/83. There is no record of agreements which have benefited from this block exemption because no Commission decision is necessary for the exemption to apply. In addition, some agreements in the brewing industry will have been given individual exemption from article 85 by the EC Commission. Details of these individual exemptions are published in the official journal of the European Communities, but a record of them is not kept by the United Kingdom Government and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Saudi Arabia (Exports)

Mrs. Roche: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the level of exports from Britain to Saudi Arabia in each of the last five years; and what information he has on the proportion of such exports which were on commission.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 14 June 1993]:* This information is regularly published in "Business Monitors" MA20 and MM20, "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom", copies of which are available in the Library.

Information on the proportion of exports on commission is not available.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Charity Law

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he is able to indicate the nature of the review which is presently taking place of the law relating to charities in Northern Ireland; how long the review has been in progress; and by what means he intends to introduce legislation to deal with the issue.

Mr. Mates: The review is an internal one involving the relevant Departments and has been in progress since March 1992. The law and administration of charities is quite different in Northern Ireland compared with the position in Great Britain and the main thrust of the review is to examine those aspects of the reforms to charity law and administration in Great Britain which may have implications for Northern Ireland. If it is decided to introduce new legislation, it is likely to be in the form of a Northern Ireland charities Order in Council under the Northern Ireland Act 1974.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking to honour the commitments in the 1991 White Paper "Privatisation of Northern Ireland Electricity" concerning provisions for existing employees to obtain a direct stake in the industry and concerning parallel provisions for shares for former NIE employees and those persons who transferred to successor generating companies to NIE.

Mr. Atkins: The objective behind any employee share purchase is to give employees the opportunity to obtain a direct stake in the company in which they are employed. This is the objective lying behind the special arrangements offered to employees of NIE for the purchase of shares in NIE. Former employees of NIE are entitled to register and apply for shares in the flotation and benefit from the incentives offered, which are enhanced for customers. Those employees who transferred to successor generating companies may also be able to participate in any share incentive schemes made available by their new employers.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Parliamentary Television Service

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council, pursuant to his answer of 5 February, *Official Report*, column 27, what further developments have taken place regarding the provision of a live feed of the Chamber of the House to hon. Members' offices.

Mr. Newton: There is little that I can usefully add to my earlier reply to the hon. Member. Proposals for the establishment of a parliamentary data and video network, on which the clean feed from the Chamber would be carried, are still under consideration by the Information Committee. I understand that the Committee hopes to be able to report to the House by the end of the year.

EDUCATION

Spelling

11. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what efforts are being made to improve standards of spelling in schools.

Mr. Forth: We are seeking to raise standards in all the basic language skills, including spelling, through the development of national curriculum English. Our proposals for revising the English Order, currently the subject of extensive consultation, give a strengthened emphasis to accurate spelling as one of the writing skills essential for the effective communication of meaning. To emphasise the importance of these skills, 5 per cent. of the marks in all GCSE written examinations are now allocated to spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Testing

12. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to review testing procedures for schools or to change the role of the new curriculum and advisory body in this area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Patten: I have asked Sir Ron Dearing to conduct a wide ranging review of the manageability of the national curriculum and the associated testing and assessment framework. The prospective remit of the new Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority is laid out in section 232 of the Education Bill currently before Parliament.

27. **Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement about the current situation regarding school tests.

Mr. Robin Squire: Most primary schools will have completed the tests of seven-year-olds. Fourteen-year-olds should have been sitting tests over the last week and a half. I deeply regret some teachers' boycott of these tests, which are necessary to monitor progress and raise standards.

My right hon. Friend has asked Sir Ron Dearing to conduct a review of the national curriculum and assessment framework. He expects to have Sir Ron's recommendations in July.

26. **Mr. George:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will meet the representatives of teachers' organisations to discuss key stage testing.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend has no plans for such a meeting. Teacher associations should make their views known to Sir Ron Dearing, the chairman designate of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, who is conducting a review of the national curriculum and assessment.

Graduate Teaching Qualifications

13. **Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has for developing access to graduate teaching qualifications.

Mr. Patten: The Department has discussed with the Higher Education Quality Council the provision of access courses for entry to initial teacher training. I understand that the council is planning to publish a list of such courses later this year.

Grant-maintained Schools

14. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will set out his plans for promoting the advantages of grant-maintained status within the local education authorities' network of schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Patten: By the end of May, 2·4 million of the Department's publications on self-governing status had been distributed, mainly in response to requests.

The Department has also organised 16 regional conferences on "Going GM" and three further events are planned for later this term. Almost 3,000 headteachers and governors of LEA maintained schools have attended the conferences, representing around 1,700 schools.

24. **Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his estimate of the cost of the Funding Agency for schools in April 1996 *(a)* on the assumption that his targets for the number of schools opting for grant-maintained status is met and *(b)* on the assumption that the number of schools opting for grant-maintained status increases at the present annual rate.

Mr. Robin Squire: Parents will decide through ballots how many schools become grant maintained. On current trends, most secondary schools and a significant minority of primary schools could be GM by April 1996. The running costs of the FAS will depend on a number of factors, including growth of the sector, but on this basis might be of the order of £20 million in 1996-97. Over time, we expect the establishment of the FAS to result in savings in DFE running costs and, as the FAS takes on responsibility for the provision of school places, to lead to a reduction in the central administration costs of LEAs.

Primary Education

15. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the current number of children in primary school education in England.

Mr. Robin Squire: The latest available figure is for January 1992, when there were 4·1 million children in maintained primary schools.

Victorian Schools

16. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether he will make special provision for modernising Victorian schools in urban areas.

Mr. Forth: The Government already provide substantial capital resources for school buildings. LEAs can choose to use the resources available to them to give priority to modernising Victorian buildings if they wish. Capital bids from the governors of voluntary-aided and grant-maintained schools are considered on their merits.

Schools (Disabled Access)

17. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to meet local education authority representatives to discuss the accessibility of schools for children with physical disabilities.

Mr. Forth: Local education authorities and school governors may seek meetings with Ministers or officials to

discuss general capital issues at any time. It is very likely that in some of these meetings the agenda will include access for disabled pupils.

A-levels

18. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the levels of achievement at A-level.

Mr. Boswell: More people than ever before are taking A-levels, passing them and passing them well. They will continue to set a benchmark for academic achievement. They are a key part of our strategy to provide clear and attractive pathways to high levels of academic and vocational achievement.

Special Educational Needs

19. **Mr. Pope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what estimate he has made as to the main factors influencing the length of time it takes local education authorities to produce statements of special educational needs.

Mr. Forth: The Audit Commission/HMI survey "Getting in on the Act" published in June 1992 looked carefully at the operation of procedures for making assessments and statements. Its conclusion was that a variety of factors could cause delay, but that lack of resources was not one of them.

The Education Bill provides for regulations which will for the first time set statutory time limits for the assessment and statementing processes. The Bill also requires the Secretary of State to issue a code of practice which will guide LEAs in their operation of those processes. The Government's aim is to ensure that assessments are concluded—and, where necessary, statements produced —as quickly as is consistent with thoroughness.

Pre-school Education

20. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he next intends to meet the Association of County Councils to discuss the provision of nursery education.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend has no plans to meet the Association of County Councils to discuss this matter.

29. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to improve the quality of educational input in different forms of pre-school provision.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department has increased its grant to the Pre-school Playgroups Association for staff training and development from £179,000 in 1990-91 to £887,000 in 1993-94. It also supports training and development work undertaken by the British Association for Early Childhood Education and by the Early Childhood Unit of the National Children's Bureau.

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many pre-school education places were available in England at the latest available date; and what percentage that number is of the total number of children in the relevant age group.

Mr. Robin Squire: Information on the number of education places is not available. In January 1992 there were nearly 630,000 pupils below compulsory school age in maintained nursery and primary schools in England of whom 330,000 were in nursery provision. The under-fives participation rates were 49 per cent. and 26 per cent. respectively.

Youth Service

21. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his estimate of the total sum needed on an annual basis to meet the current statutory requirements in respect of youth service provision.

Mr. Boswell: The Government do not determine centrally how much should be spent on particular local government services. It is primarily for individual local authorities to decide how to discharge their duty to secure adequate provision out of the resources made available to them under revenue support grant.

Schools (Funding)

22. **Mr. Brandreth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received regarding the balance of funding between primary and secondary schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: We have received a number of recent representations from schools and hon. Members about primary and secondary school funding under local management of schools, including one from the North West Primary Heads Forum. We have made clear that this is a matter for individual local education authorities.

Further and Higher Education Charters

23. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received from students on the further and higher education charters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: We are currently consulting on the draft further and higher education charters. To date two representations have been received from students; from the University college London union and the other from the South East Wales Students Association.

Grammar Schools

25. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to ensure that there will be continued provision of grammar school places.

Mr. Forth: The provision of school places to be filled on the basis of academic ability is a matter for local education authorities and governing bodies, taking account of local needs and the wishes of parents and the community. My right hon. Friend will continue to consider very carefully any proposals put to him for the introduction or cessation of selective admission arrangements which would amount to a significant change in the character of the school.

Financial Assistance

28. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the adequacy of financial assistance to enable people to continue or re-enter education.

Mr. Boswell: Most students on designated full-time and sandwich courses leading to a first degree or certain comparable qualifications are eligible for mandatory awards and student loans. Students on other courses can apply for a discretionary or postgraduate award. The Government have commissioned a survey of the income and expenditure of students on designated courses, and the Gulbenkian and Sir John Cass's Foundations are undertaking a study of the provision of discretionary awards.

Oxford and Cambridge College Fees

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received about the basis for calculating grants for college fees at Oxford and Cambridge.

Mr. Boswell: The Department has received representations from those acting on behalf of the colleges at Oxford and Cambridge, as part of the annual negotiations on the level of college fees.

Music Funding

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to ring-fence funding at local education authority level for *(a)* inter-school instrumental teaching, *(b)* orchestras, *(c)* choirs and *(d)* chamber music.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend has no plans to change the current arrangements for funding school music at local education authority level. He considers it right that local authorities should determine the appropriate level of spending on music services in the light of their judgment of local needs and priorities and in the light of the demand from schools.

Outdoor Education

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to ensure that local education authorities have a continuing responsibility to provide outdoor education for pupils at all state sector schools in their area.

Mr. Robin Squire: No. Where funds have been delegated to individual schools, it is their responsibility to determine—having regard to the requirements of the National Curriculum Order for Physical Education—the level of provision for outdoor education needed, and how it should be provided.

Pupil Selection

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to alter the interpretation of significant change of character to increase the selection of pupils in *(a)* local authority maintained and *(b)* grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: None.

HEALTH

Mental Health

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the percentage of acutely mentally ill statutorily detained in each of the last five years, by region and in London.

Mr. Bowis: The latest available information is shown in the table.

A change in the method of data collection following the Korner review in 1987 means that figures for years prior to 1987-88 are not directly comparable with later years.

Precise figures for London are not readily available, but an approximation can be made by amalgamating the four Thames regions.

Patients formally admitted to NHS facilities as a percentage of all admissions under the mental illness specialty, by regional health authority, 1987-88 to 1989-90

Regional Health Authority	*Year ending 31 March* 1987-88 per cent.	1988-89 per cent.	1989-90 per cent.
Northern	7	6	7
Yorkshire	6	7	8
Trent	8	10	11
East Anglia	7	9	10
North West Thames	18	12	15
North East Thames	10	9	10
South East Thames	7	7	7
South West Thames	16	20	15
Wessex	8	7	6
Oxford	5	7	8
South Western	12	7	8
West Midlands	8	8	9
Mersey	7	8	8
North Western	7	8	8
Special Hospitals	8	8	9
Thames Regions	12	12	12

Note: The above figures are calculated using data from the Korner aggregate return KH15 and the Hospital Episodes Statistics (HES) system. 1987-88 was the first year of collection. The figures for that year may therefore be less reliable than later years.

Hospital Beds

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many beds are currently available at *(a)* the Royal London hospital, *(b)* St. Bartholomew's hospital and *(c)* the London chest hospital.

Dr. Mawhinney: The available information is at unit level only and details by specific site are not separately identifiable. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of the respective national health service trust and health authorities for details.

Paediatric Beds

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many paediatric beds there are in each provider unit in the Thames regions.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Average daily number of available paediatric[1] beds by provider unit Thames regions

	1991-92
North West Thames Region	
Bradford General Hospital south wing	34
South Bedfordshire General hospital and Maternity Services Unit	50
South Bedfordshire Community and Mental Health Services Unit	10
East Hertfordshire Health Services	20
St. Albans City	40
South West Hertfordshire Provider Unit	32
Barnet General Hospitals Unit	56
Northwick Park Hospital	45
Harefield Hospital	8
Ashford Hospital	22
West Middlesex University Hospital	41
Ealing Hospital	24
Riverside Health Unit	83
St. Mary's Hospital Group Services	36
Mount Vernon Hospital NHS Trust	16
The Hillingdon Hospital NHS Trust	20
Central Middlesex Hospital NHS Trust	25
North Hertfordshire NHS Trust	31
North East Thames Region:	
Basildon and Thurrock Acute Unit	30
Mid Essex Hospital Services Unit	47
North East Essex Acute Unit	28
North East Essex Community Unit Central Clinic	13
Essex and Hertfordshire Health Services	33
Oldchurch Hospital	38
Harold Wood Unit	17
City and Hackney Health Service	38
Newham Health Services	30
Enfield Acute Unit	31
Redbridge Unit	25
Waltham Forest Health Authority Acute Unit (Provider)	31
Bloomsbury and Islington Acute Unit (Southside)	58
Bloomsbury and Islington Acute Unit (Northside)	36
Southend Health Care NHS Trust	21
Royal London Hospital and Associated Community Services NHS Trust	40
Royal Free Hampstead NHS Trust	39
Royal National Throat Nose and Ear Hospital NHS Trust	11
Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Trust	46
North Middlesex Hospital NHS Trust	27
South East Thames Region:	
Brighton Health Care	71
Eastbourne Hospitals	24
Hastings Learning Disabilities Unit	29
South East Kent General Hospitals Unit	47
Thanet General Unit	24
Canterbury General Unit	36
Dartford and Gravesham Acute Services Unit	19
Maidstone Acute and Community Care Unit	39
Medway Acute Unit	20
Medway Priority Care Unit	33
Tunbridge Wells Acute Unit	43
Queen Victoria Hospital Provider Unit	26
Bexley (Queen Mary's Hospital, Sidcup) Unit	20
Greenwich District Hospital Provider Unit	28
Brook General Hospital Provider Unit	28
Bromley Acute Unit	29
St. Thomas' Hospital Provider Unit	42
King's Health Care Provider Unit	53
Guy's and Lewisham NHS Trust	144
South West Thames Region:	
North West Surrey Acute Unit	42
Frimley Park Unit	28
East Surrey Hospital and Community Healthcare	19
St. Richard's Hospital (Unit 1)	24
Crawley—Horsham Unit	26
Mid Sussex Unit (East Unit)	18
Worthing and Southlands Hospital Unit	32
Croydon Health Services Unit	40
Queen Mary's University Hospital	33
St. George's Group Acute Services Unit	64
Queen Mary's Hospital for Children	70
Epsom Health Care NHS Trust	20
Royal Surrey County and St. Lukes Hospital NHS Trust	32
Kingston Hospital NHS Trust	43
St. Helier NHS Trust	5

[1] Beds in wards open day and night and classified for use by general patients—children.

Doncaster Health Authority

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the Doncaster health authority made an application for authority by statutory instrument to distribute trust charitable funds to health trusts; and what is the number of the relevant statutory instrument.

Dr. Mawhinney: Doncaster health authority lodged a request to transfer charitable funds to the Doncaster Royal infirmary and Montague national health service trust on 24 May. The statutory instrument has not yet been made.

Trent Regional Health Authority

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she is yet able to make a statement over the location of a new high-security unit in the Trent regional health authority area.

Mr. Bowis: Rampton hospital already provides high security psychiatric services. There are no current plans for a further high security unit to be located in Trent region. I understand that Trent regional health authority is planning further development of its medium-secure service, but that no firm decision have been taken about this.

Single General Practitioner Practices

Mr. Duncan Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many single-handed general practitioner practices there are *(a)* in England and *(b)* in London; and what is their average patient holding.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is shown in the table:

	England	*Greater London*
Number of single-handed GP practices	2,867	772
Average patient list size for single-handed GPs	2,118	2,276

Note: Data relate to 1 October 1992 except for the average patient list size for Greater London, for which the latest available figure is for 1 April 1992.

Prescriptions

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what would be the cost of exempting all recipients of disability working allowance from the payment of prescription charges;

(2) how many recipients of disability working allowance qualify for free prescriptions on the ground of low income in the most recent 12-month period available;

(3) what is her response to recommendation 16 of the third report of the Social Security Select Committee (HC, 1992-93, No. 284–I) that disability working allowance recipients should be entitled to free prescriptions in the same way that family credit recipients are.

Dr. Mawhinney: The health benefits unit does not keep a record of the social security benefits received by people who claim help from the national health service low income scheme. The estimated current annual cost of extending automatic help with national health service costs, to recipients of the allowance and their dependants, on the same basis as it is available to those receiving income support or family credit, would be around £0·75 million. The Government will respond in due course to the third report of the Social Security Select Committee (HC 1992-93, No. 284–I).

Patients Charter

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish for each health authority the reports on the performance of individual local hospital and ambulance services against patients charter rights and standards.

Mr. Sackville: Health authorities will be publishing annual reports on performance by their principal providers against patients charter rights and standards as required under the charter.

Notifiable Diseases, Avon

Mr. Aspinwall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health is she will state the number of cases of notifiable diseases reported in the County of Avon in 1992, by category.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Number (Provisional) of Notifiable Diseases reported in the County of Avon in 1992

	Total
Food poisoning	1,130
Dysentery	271
Rubella	137
Viral hepatitis	120
Scarlet Fever	103
Measles	98
All meningitis	69
Tuberculosis	52
Mumps	43
Whooping Cough	23
Malaria	18
Meningococcal septicaemia	6
Ophthalmia neonatorum	5
Typhoid fever	2
Leptospirosis	1
Tetanus	0
Acute poliomyelitis	0
Acute encephalitis	0
Cholera	0
Plague	0
Anthrax	0
Diphtheria	0
Smallpox	0
Yellow fever	0
Typhus	0
Relapsing fever	0
Rabies	0
Viral haemorrhagic fever	0

Dryburn Hospital, Durham

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many admissions there were to wards 2 and 10 of Dryburn hospital, in the City of Durham constituency, for the last 12 months for which figures are available; and what figures she has for the time periods for which beds in those wards were occupied by each of those admissions;

(2) how much was spent in the last 12 months for which figures are available, by Dryburn hospital in the City of Durham constituency on *(a)* nursing appointments, *(b)* administrative appointments and *(c)* medical appointments.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Professor John Clarke, the chairman of the North Durham district health authority, for details.

Practice Charters

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many family health services authority and general practitioner practice charters have now been produced; and if she will list them.

Dr. Mawhinney: All family health services authorities were required to develop and produce local charters by 1 April 1993. We do not yet have any information on the numbers of general practitioner practices which have voluntarily produced their own practice charter.

Hospital Ophthalmic Departments

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what guidelines her Department gives to health authorities for record keeping and collating statistics in hospital ophthalmic departments;

(2) what data health authorities are required to collate from hospital ophthalmology departments.

Dr. Mawhinney: Purchasers and providers are required to keep agreed sets of data on all general in-patient and out-patient activity and for patients awaiting elective admission. The information requirements are described in module 1 (hospital services) and module 3 (paramedic and cross-sector services) of the national health service data manual, copies of which are available in the Library. In addition, in relation to hospital ophthalmic departments, details of sight tests undertaken and numbers of glasses prescribed by the hospital eye service must be kept.

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of referrals from general practitioners and optometrists to hospital ophthalmology out-patients clinics in each year since 1985.

Dr. Mawhinney: The available information is shown in the table. Separate figures for referrals from optometrists are not available centrally.

Consultant out-patient activity—ophthalmology departments

	Referral attendances	*Consultant initiated attendances*	*GP written referral request*[1]
1987-88	388,973	2,277,436	451,006
1988-89	574,532	2,264,752	467,371
1989-90	579,693	2,308,099	462,710
1990-91	599,520	2,331,682	478,141
1991-92	663,192	2,350,056	529,243

[1]GP written referrals are included in the referral attendances column.

Blind and Partially Sighted People

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people were registered blind and partially sighted in each year since 1985; and what figures are projected for registration in *(a)* five and *(b)* 10 years time.

Mr. Bowis: The information held centrally is shown in the table. The Department has not made projections for future registrations.

Number of people registered as blind and partially sighted as at 31 March 1986-91, England

	1986	*1988*	*1991*
Total registered as at 31 March			
Blind	120,548	126,828	136,195
Partially sighted	71,104	79,048	93,777
New registrations in year ending 31 March			
Blind	12,026	13,901	13,629
Partially sighted	10,466	12,014	13,639

Source: DH Return SSDA902.

Eye Diseases

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people aged *(a)* under 40, *(b)* 41-65, *(c)* 66-70 and *(d)* over 70 years suffered from glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, macular eye disease and cataracts in each year since 1985.

Mr. Bowis: This information is not available centrally. Data on the causes of blindness and partial sight was first collected by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in 1990-91 and is currently being processed.

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has regarding the incidence of eye disease leading to blindness or hospital treatment in the United Kingdom, each of the EC countries, the United States of America and Japan.

Mr. Bowis: Information on the incidence of all eye disease is not available centrally. Data have been collected for 1990-91 on the causes of blindness and partial sight referred to opthalmologists and this information is being prepared by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. Comparative data for other countries are not available.

In 1991-92, in England, there were 184,000 finished consultant episodes and 64,000 day cases in the hospital eye service, and 613,910 referrals made by the general optical service to opthalmologists.

Hospital Places (Allocation)

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she is taking to ensure equality of treatment between patients of fund-holding and non-fund-holding general practitioner practices in the allocation of hospital places.

Dr. Mawhinney: Guidance agreed with the joint consultants committee was issued to hospital consultants in June 1991, in EL(91)84, a copy of which is available in the Library. This stated that waiting times should not be offered to one general practitioner which would disadvantage the patients of another practice. Where a unit has spare capacity, this may be offered to any purchaser.

Nurse Grading Appeals

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will set out by regional health authority how many nurse clinical grading appeals are pending at a national level; what amount of money these claims involve; what steps are being made to speed the appeal process; and when she estimates this process will be completed;

(2) if she will set out by each health authority region the number of nurse clinical grading appeals still outstanding, the amount of money these claims involve, the steps being made to speed the appeal process and when the region is expected to have dealt with all appeals.

Mr. Sackville: The information on the number of appeals outstanding is shown in the table. No estimate of the total sum of arrears of pay due to be paid as a result of grading appeals has been made. Regional health authorities have been asked to clear all outstanding appeals by 31 October 1993.

Nurses and midwives clinical grading appeals outstanding as at 31 May 1993

Region	*Employing authority level*	*Regional level*	*National level*	*Total*
Northern	40	1,678	127	1,845
Yorkshire	134	1,057	222	1,413
Trent	538	1,695	115	2,348
East Anglian	0	359	115	474
North West Thames	84	986	85	1,155
North East Thames	62	587	97	746
South West Thames	0	324	174	498
South East Thames	8	707	123	838
Wessex	0	543	163	706
Oxford	0	29	233	262
South Western	0	1,066	103	1,169
West Midlands	1,526	1,424	81	3,031
Mersey	413	1,516	315	2,244
North Western	369	2,811	201	3,381
Total	3,174	14,782	2,154	20,110

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many letters have been received by her Department about the proposed extension of the limited list for pharmaceutical products from *(a)* the medical profession, *(b)* right hon. and hon. Members, *(c)* members of the public and *(d)* patient representative bodies; and if she will indicate in each case broadly how many of those letters supported the proposed extension and how many opposed it;

(2) how many representations she has received from right hon. and hon. Members about her proposed extension of the limited list for pharmaceutical products; in what form those representations were made; in how many cases those representations supported the extension of the list.

Dr. Mawhinney: There have been 174 letters from the medical profession; 981 letters from right hon. and hon. Members; 438 letters from members of the public and several letters from 11 of the bodies representing patients. A total of 130 representations have been received from right hon. and hon. Members in the form of parliamentary questions to Ministers. There have also been a number of requests for meetings with Ministers. These letters and representations have raised concerns about the selected list scheme.

Clothier Inquiry

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the location of *(a)* the administration and secretarial facilities for the Clothier inquiry and *(b)* Sir Cecil Clothier's office; and what links the administration of the inquiry has with the Trent regional health authority headquarters;

(2) where the Clothier inquiry is to be based; and what funding is to be made available for witnesses and the parents of the victims in respect of their travel expenses, loss of time from work and child minding.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The address of the independent inquiry is:

Office of Sir Cecil Clothier KCB QC
c/o Davies Arnold Cooper Solicitors
6-8 Bouverie Street
LONDON
EC4Y 8DD

The inquiry will be conducted independently of Trent regional health authority. One employee of the RHA has been seconded permanently to the inquiry for its duration, to act as the clerk.

Reasonable expenses incurred by witnesses in assisting the inquiry will be met. Claims for such expenses should be submitted to the clerk for consideration.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements have been made under the present Clothier inquiry in respect of financing legal representation for the parents.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The investigative rather than adversarial nature of the Clothier inquiry means that there is not the need for extensive legal representation of witnesses. If the parents wish to be accompanied to give evidence to the inquiry, by a lawyer or anyone else, additional expenses will be allowed to cover reasonable costs incurred.

United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visitors

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many disciplinary hearings the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visitors has held within the last five years; and what was their outcome;

(2) if she will list the members of the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visitors professional conduct committee stating *(a)* their profession, *(b)* the body from which they were elected or appointed and *(c)* the chair of that body.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to consult the council for details.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the remit of the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visitors professional conduct committee; and what procedures it is obliged to follow in the course of disciplinary proceedings.

Mr. Sackville: Section 12 of the Nurses Midwives and Health Visitors Act 1979, requires the council to constitute committees, by rules, to deal with proceedings for a person's removal from, or restoration to, the register, for the suspension, or termination of the suspension, of a person's registration in the register and to make rules governing the procedure of these committees. The relevant rules are set out in the Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors (Professional Conduct) Rules 1993 Approval Order 1993 (Statutory Instrument 1993 No. 893).

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the members of the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visitors, stating *(a)* their profession, *(b)* the body from which they were elected or appointed and *(c)* the chair of that body.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested has been placed in the Library. Members of the council are either elected under the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting (Electoral Scheme) Order 1992 (Statutory Instrument 1992 No. 2159) or appointed by the Secretary of State under section 1 of the Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors Act 1992. Members are not elected or appointed as representatives of particular bodies.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Television Licences

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many people paid their television licences at a concessionary rate in each year since 1985.

Mr. Brooke: The estimated number of households covered by a concessionary television for each year since 1985-86 is as follows:

Period	*Number*
1985-86	502,000
1986-87	554,000
1987-88	596,000
1988-89	645,000

Period	Number
1989-90	688,000
1990-91	635,000
1991-92	630,000
1992-93	639,000

Albert Dock

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what are the latest tourist figures for the Albert dock; and how they are calculated.

Mr. Sproat: I understand that the Albert dock received 5 million visitors in 1992. This figure is calculated by an independent research company on behalf of the Albert Dock Company.

Community-based Sport

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what measures he is taking to promote community-based sports programmes in England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Sports Council, which is funded by my Department, is active in promoting and funding community-based sports programmes. In 1992-93 they provided over £13 million to assist the development of over 500 projects. The business sponsorship incentive scheme for sport launched in November 1992 aims to increase the amount of business sponsorship going into grass roots sport including community-based projects. The scheme has a budget for Great Britain of £3·7 million in 1993-94. In addition schedule 12 to the Education Bill will enable school governing bodies to enter into joint management agreements for the community use of school facilities.

Performing Arts

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what measures he is taking to promote the performing arts in England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Government recognise the great value of the arts in this country both for their own sake and for their contribution to the economy. It is one of the objectives of the Department of National Heritage to encourage the living arts to flourish.

The Government have demonstrated their commitment to the arts through the generous settlements which the Arts Council has received. Since the Government took office in 1979, the Arts Council's grant has increased by 45 per cent. in real terms. Even within the present restraints on public expenditure, I have been able to increase the Arts Council's grant this year by £4·4 million to £225·6 million, a rise in cash terms of 2 per cent.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what communications his Department has had with the national steering committee of the nuclear-free zone local authorities on the matters of *(a)* nuclear testing and *(b)* nuclear non-proliferation.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office recently wrote to the national steering committee of the Nuclear Free Zone Local Authorities in reply to a letter about nuclear testing and non-proliferation.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the United Nations informed Her Majesty's Government that it was banning all visits to UNPROFOR by persons not directly connected with UNPROFOR; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We were advised by the United Nations on 1 April 1993 that visits to UNPROFOR would not be accepted from 5 April 1993.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many jobs have been gained or lost in the European Community in each year since 1985.

Miss Widdecombe: The following table shows the available information:

Net increase in numbers of people in employment (thousands)

Year	[1] EC 10	[1] EC 12
1985-86	1,052	n/a
1986-87	868	1,492
1987-88	2,012	2,490
1988-89	1,440	2,042
1989-90	2,763	3,200
1990-91	338	600

Source:
Eurostat "Labour Force Survey 1983-91".
[1] "EC 12" covers the present 12 member states. Spain and Portugal joined in 1986, so comparable figures can be calculated for 1985-86 onwards only for the 10 previous member states, designated in the table as "EC 10".

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the annual rate of turnover in employment for the last year for which figures are available.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department does not publish or collect statistics relating to the annual rate of turnover in employment.

Mr. Pope: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in *(a)* Accrington and Rossendale, Blackburn, Burnley and Pendle travel-to-work areas in total and *(b)* Accrington and Rossendale travel-to-work area over the age of 60 years who are unemployed are specifically excluded from the unemployment statistics because of their age.

Miss Widdecombe: The claimant count is a by-product of the system designed to pay unemployment-related benefits. It comprises those claiming unemployment benefit, income support or national insurance credits, who say that they are unemployed and satisfy the conditions for claiming benefits.

Unemployed people aged 60 years and over are not required to be available for work in order to receive income support and national insurance credits. Unlike people aged under 60 years, they do not have to attend at an Employment Service local office to claim these benefits and consequently, if they choose not to attend, will not appear on the claimant count.

Mr. Pope: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in *(a)* the Accrington and Rossendale, Blackburn, Burnley and Pendle travel-to-work areas in total and *(b)* the Accrington and Rossendale travel-to-work area would be eligible for unemployment benefit if they were not excluded from the calculation because they are claiming other sources of benefit.

Miss Widdecombe: The claimant count is a by-product of the system designed to pay unemployment-related benefits. It includes those claiming income support or national insurance credits on account of being unemployed as well as those claiming unemployment benefit itself. No information is available on those who do not claim these benefits.

School Leavers

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list for each year since 1988 the number of pupils in Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Cheshire and Merseyside reaching the minimum school leaving age and the number who entered employment directly, entered a youth training scheme on leaving school, returned for a further period at school, or entered a further education college; and if he will provide such estimates as are available for 1993.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is available only for the whole of the north-west region and is given in the following table. The information is compiled by United Kingdom heads of careers services on behalf of the Careers Service. This information is not yet available for 1992 and 1993. Information for 1988 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Numbers of pupils leaving secondary school at minimum school leaving age in the North West region, London and their destinations for the years 1989-1991

	1989	1990	1991
Full-time education	40,540	40,760	44,040
Youth training (YT)[1]	25,520	18,870	15,280
Employment	14,170	12,890	9,230
Not in any[2]	5,820	7,080	8,130
Unknown[3]	7,790	5,100	4,180
Total	93,840	84,700	80,860

Source: School Leavers' Destinations Survey
Figures rounded to nearest 10.
[1] Including those on YT with employed status and those using training credits.
[2] May be unemployed or not available for work for any of a wide range of reasons.
[3] Those who failed to let the Careers Service or school know what they were doing and who failed to respond to at least two attempts at follow-up by the Careers Office.

Palace of Westminster (Safety Standards)

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 8 June, *Official Report*, column *227-28*, if he will set out the dates of all inspections carried out in the Palace of Westminster relating to health and safety; and if he will give details of all fire safety regulations and standards with which the Palace of Westminster has been found to comply.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The following planned inspection visits to the Palace of Westminster have been made by the Health and Safety Executive since its formation in 1975:

23 August 1978
19 July 1985
3 February 1986
20 September 1989
9 January 1993
8 April 1993

In addition, visits have been made in connection with construction activities. However, as these are recorded against individual contractors, they cannot be separately identified without incurring disproportionate cost.

Fire safety regulations and standards are the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

PRIME MINISTER

Correspondence

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Prime Minister when the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford, can expect to receive a reply to her letters of 8 February, 31 March and 4 May regarding the concerns of her constituents, Paul and Elisabeth Towlson.

The Prime Minister: Shortly.

Public Expenditure Review

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Prime Minister when he expects the current review of public expenditure being carried out by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury to be completed.

The Prime Minister: We expect to complete the reviews by the end of this Parliament, although preliminary conclusions from the first four reviews of social security, health, education and home affairs should inform this year's public expenditure survey.

India

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he made and what assurances he received on human rights from the Indian Government during his visit to the country in January this year; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I raised British concerns about human rights with the Indian Prime Minister. He assured me of his Government's commitment to respect human rights and determination to take firm action against wrongdoers. He also confirmed that he would be introducing legislation in the spring session of the Indian Parliament to set up an independent Human Rights Commission. This legislation was tabled on 14 May.

Allivane International

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he has received since January 1991 on the role played by Allivane International in exporting arms and military equipment to Iran.

The Prime Minister: I have received a number of representations from the hon. Member and from the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) since January 1991 on the role of Allivane International in exporting arms and military equipment to Iran. Allegations about illegal exports by this company were investigated by Her Majesty's Customs in 1987-88. No prosecution was begun.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 June.

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 June.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Overseas Visits

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Prime Minister on how many occasions the procedure of paragraph 74 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" has been invoked in relation to official visits overseas; and at what total cost for the latest available year.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 14 June 1993]*: The information requested can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

WALES

Technology Initiative

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish with regard to the sum he has allocated for the technology initiative in Welsh secondary schools *(a)* the method he used to inform schools, *(b)* the name of each school that submitted a bid, *(c)* the criteria used by his Department to determine the application and *(d)* the sum of money allocated to each successful school.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Welsh Office wrote to all directors of education and chairs of governors of grant-maintained schools in Wales inviting bids under the initiative. A copy of the letter was also sent, for information, direct to the head teacher of all eligible schools in Wales. The closing date for bids is 16 July and I expect to be able to announce details of successful bids in early September.

Schools selected for support will be expected to show evidence of a capacity to establish a technological ethos which will pervade the curriculum as a whole, as well as delivering a distinctive offering in the teaching of technology itself.

Account will also be taken of the degree to which the school can demonstrate a commitment to developing links with local businesses and giving parity of status to vocational and academic studies. The project put forward should directly contribute to the achievement of the schools technology and staff development plans and add value and improve existing facilities at the school. Full details of these criteria are included in the letter sent to all eligible schools.

NHS Trust Chief Executives

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for the chief executives of *(a)* the Ceredigion and Mid Wales national health service trust, *(b)* the Glen Clwyd district general hospital trust, *(c)* the Wrexham Maelor hospital national health service trust, *(d)* the Gwent Community Health national health service trust, *(e)* the Powys Health Care national health service trust, *(f)* the Llandough hospital national health service trust, *(g)* the Glan Hafren national health service trust, *(h)* the Carmarthen and district national health service trust, *(i)* the Swansea national health service trust, *(j)* the Llanelli/Dinefwr national health service trust, *(k)* the Bridgend and district national health service trust and

(l) the Gofal Cymuned Clwydian Community and Care national health service trust, (i) the salaries payable to each in their previous post of unit general managers, separately distinguishing the performance-related pay and (ii) the salaries now payable to each separately distinguishing the performance-related pay.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Salaries for general managers of directly managed units are set within prescribed salary bands. The relevant salary ranges for the unit general manager posts previously occupied by the chief executives of these national health service trusts up to 31 March 1993 were as follows:

National health service trust	*Salary range*	
	Minimum £	*Maximum*[1] £
1. Ceredigion and Mid Wales	33,160	43,920
2. Glan Clwyd district general hospital	36,750	51,980
3. Wrexham Maelor hospital	36,750	51,980
4. Gwent Community Health	36,750	52,580
5. Powys Health Care	36,750	49,200
6. Llandough hospital	36,750	48,400
7. Glan Hafren	36,750	53,180
8. Carmarthen and district	36,750	51,270
9. Swansea	36,750	51,980
10. Llanelli/Dinefwr	33,160	46,010
11. Bridgend and district	36,750	53,180
12. Gofal Cymuned Clwydian community care	36,750	53,180

[1] Inclusive of performance-related pay.

Information on salaries payable to these national health service trust chief executives from 1 April 1993 is not held centrally. Information on total emoluments paid to the highest paid board member and emoluments paid to other board members will be published in due course in the annual accounts produced by each national health service trust.

School Leavers

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number and percentage of school leavers in Wales who have gone on to further and higher education in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Participation in further and higher education has increased substantially in recent years. Our policy is to secure even greater participation rates in future years.

The figures requested are as follows:

School leavers entering higher or further education

Academic year	*Number*	*Percentage*
1979-80	10,855	24
1980-81	11,855	27
1981-82	13,040	29
1982-83	13,915	31
1983-84	13,090	30
1984-85	13,820	31
1985-86	13,345	31
1986-87	13,935	32
1987-88	13,590	34
1988-89	13,945	36
1989-90	14,155	40
1990-91	15,600	47

Source:
Statistics of Education in Wales: No. 11 1986
Statistics of Education in Wales: Schools No. 5 1991
Statistics of Education and Training in Wales: Schools No. 1 1993.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many nursery school teachers are employed in each of the counties of Wales; and what were the figures for 1973.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The number of full-time equivalent nursery school teachers in schools in 1992 is given in the following table, together with statistics for 1976—the earliest year for which comparable figures are available.

	January 1976	*January 1992*
Clwyd	9	5
Dyfed	6	7
Gwent	41	23
Gwynedd	0	0
Mid Glamorgan	51	52
Powys	0	0
South Glamorgan	29	23
West Glamorgan	21	5
Total	157	115

Nursery Education

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what future powers his Department proposes to take concerning nursery education in Wales;

(2) if he will make a statement on the future of nursery education in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: There are no plans to alter the present basis for provision, which is at the discretion of local authorities in the case of LEA-maintained schools.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* nursery schools and *(b)* nursery classes there are in each of the counties of Wales; and what were the comparable figures for 1973.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information on the number of classes in nursery schools is not collected centrally. The earliest year for which comparable information on nursery schools is available is 1975-76 and 1977-78 was the earliest year in which comparable information on the number of nursery classes in primary schools was collected.

	Number of nursery schools[1]		*Number of nursery classes in primary schools*[2]	
	1975-76	*1991-92*	*1977-78*	*1991-92*
Clwyd	4	3	68	206
Dyfed	2	3	60	77
Gwent	19	11	73	107
Gwynedd	0	0	93	41
Mid Glamorgan	21	23	211	183
Powys	0	0	28	30
South Glamorgan	12	10	56	96
West Glamorgan	9	2	167	195

[1] At January each year.
[2] At September each year.

School Meals

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing the number and proportion of children receiving school meals, broken down into *(a)* paid and *(b)* free in (i) primary schools, (ii) secondary schools and (iii) special schools in each year since 1987-88.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The number and proportion of pupils in schools taking paid meals and free meals is shown in the following table.

		Paid	*Free*
Primary schools:			
1987-88	Number	77,267	56,330
	Percentage	33·8	24·6
1988-89	Number	88,126	39,891
	Percentage	37·6	17·0
1989-90	Number	93,274	40,093
	Percentage	38·6	16·6
1990-91	Number	90,514	41,598
	Percentage	37·3	17·1
1991-92	Number	85,907	48,708
	Percentage	34·9	19·8
Secondary schools:			
1987-88	Number	58,022	30,008
	Percentage	32·6	16·9
1988-89	Number	63,532	17,956
	Percentage	37·2	10·5
1989-90	Number	61,526	16,343
	Percentage	37·0	9·8
1990-91	Number	64,621	16,022
	Percentage	39·4	9·8
1991-92	Number	58,275	19,595
	Percentage	34·1	11·5
Special schools:			
1987-88	Number	507	2,681
	Percentage	15·0	79·2
1988-89	Number	1,294	1,609
	Percentage	38·7	48·2
1989-90	Number	1,342	1,521
	Percentage	41·5	47·1
1990-91	Number	1,282	1,395
	Percentage	41·5	45·1
1991-92	Number	1,272	1,400
	Percentage	40·7	44·8

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the level of public expenditure on the school meal service in each year since 1979 in cash and real terms.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information available is given in the following table. Information for the years 1980-81 to 1984-85 is not available on a consistent basis.

Net current expenditure on school catering

	Cash	*Constant 1991-92 prices*
	£ million	*£ million*
1979-80	26·1	60·2
1985-86	28·5	40·9
1986-87	29·6	41·1
1987-88	30·2	39·8
1988-89	24·7	30·3
1989-90	27·1	31·2
1990-91	30·5	32·6
1991-92	35·6	35·6
[1]1992-93	38·8	37·5

[1] Revised estimates.

Beaches

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the impact of the proportion of Welsh beaches credited in the national beach awards by the Tidy Britain Group on tourism in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am pleased that 39 beaches in Wales —over 90 per cent. of those which applied—were credited with national seaside awards by the Tidy Britain Group. This is a significant increase over the number of awards made last year and represents a substantial achievement requiring exacting standards of water quality and beach management. I am sure that these awards will provide a boost to tourism in Wales.

Mature Students

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what financial help and support is available in Wales for mature students in full-time education; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Local education authorities in England and Wales have a duty to provide mandatory awards to students who are personally qualified and who attend designated higher education courses. All courses that attract mandatory awards also attract student loans. In certain circumstances the mandatory award provides for an extra allowance for older students.

LEAs may also provide discretionary awards to students on non-designated courses or to those who do not qualify for mandatory awards. In addition, discretionary help may be available from other sources such as institutional access funds, a career development loan or the educational trust funds and charities.

School Performance

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his best estimate of the cost of implementing his proposals for the publication of information on schools' and colleges' performance; and where he has published his estimate.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Decisions on the format and extent of the publication of school and college performance data this year will be taken in the light of responses to consultation currently being undertaken. Costs, when known, will be met from within sub-head F.15(1) of class XV, vote 5 of the Supply Estimates 1993-94 (HC495-XV) published on 9 March 1993.

A copy of the consultation paper and of HC495-XV are available in the Library of the House.

Cancer

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps the Welsh Office it taking to reduce the incidence of cancer in Gwynedd.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The prime responsibility for improving the health of the people of Gwynedd lies with the local health authorities. An action plan to reduce the incidence of cancer forms part of the local strategy for

health which I approved earlier this year. This strategy was informed by the "Protocol for Investment in Health Gain: Cancers" which was published by the Welsh Health Planning Forum in December 1990.

Recycling

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many recycling centres are currently in operation in each county in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not held centrally. I refer my hon. Friend to the district councils, which are responsible for recycling.

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of household waste from each county in Wales has been recycled in each year since 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on the percentage of household waste in Wales which is recycled is not available.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total amount spent by each district health authority and NHS trust in Wales on press and public relations in *(a)* 1989-90, *(b)* 1990-91 and *(c)* 1991-92.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the annual total estimated cost of paying unemployment benefit and assuming the unemployed total, not seasonally adjusted, to be that as at April 1993.

Mr. Redwood: The latest available expenditure estimate, for 1990-91, was published by the Central Statistical Office in table 8.6 of the 1993 edition of Regional Trends (No. 28), which is available in the Library of the House.

TRANSPORT

Transport Research Laboratory

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the research projects undertaken in each of the last three years by the Transport Research Laboratory and the cost of each project.

Mr. Key: I have placed in the Library tables listing projects undertaken by the Transport Research Laboratory in 1992-93 for the Department of Transport and other public sector customers. Information for prior years in the form requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. I have placed in the Library copies of the published research programmes for 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Trunk Roads

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much his Department has spent in each of the last 10 years buying mineral rights for land compulsorily purchased for trunk road schemes.

Mr. Key: I regret that this information is not held centrally and could therefore be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Ship Safety

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what controls on standards of safety his Department exercises over ships sailing under flags of convenience in British and EC waters; and how these are monitored and satisfied.

Mr. Norris: The United Kingdom takes a leading role within the International Maritime Organisation in developing internationally agreed safety standards and ensuring the implementation of those standards by every flag state. In addition, the United Kingdom and 14 other European countries, including all the EC coastal states, operate a co-ordinated system of inspection of foreign ships entering their ports. Each member of this system, known as the memorandum of understanding on port state control—MOU—has agreed to inspect 25 per cent. of individual ships calling at their ports. The United Kingdom has set a higher target of 30 per cent. and in recent years this has been met. It is estimated that around 85 per cent. of foreign ships entering the MOU region as a whole are inspected at least once annually. Within this system, those ships flying the flags of countries with poor safety records are, from July this year, to be selected for special attention.

London Travelcard

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will bring forward legislation to ensure the continued existence of the London Travelcard; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The Railways Bill includes provisions which will give the franchising director power to require franchisees to participate in multi-modal ticketing schemes such as the London Travelcard. The Secretary of State will give him guidance on the exercise of that power, and franchisees will then be required to participate in such ticketing arrangements in accordance with the terms of their franchise agreements. The legislation that the Government hope soon to bring forward to deregulate London bus services will give all operators the right to participate in multi-modal/multi-operator ticketing schemes on fair terms. We fully recognise the importance and value of the London Travelcard, and are actively working with all the parties concerned to see how its future can best be secured. We have made it clear that if further changes to legislation are needed to ensure the continuation of Travelcard, such changes will be incorporated in the proposed Bill.

Traffic Accidents

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish figures showing the numbers and proportions of children in each standard region killed or injured in traffic accidents, giving the most recently available annual figures.

Mr. Key: The numbers and proportions of children in each standard region killed or injured in traffic accidents in 1991 are shown in the table.

Child casualties by Standard Region: Great Britain 1991

Number/Percentage

Standard region	*Killed*			*All casualties*		
	Children aged 0-15	*All ages*	*Children percentage of all ages*	*Children aged 0-15*	*All ages*	*Children percentage of all ages*
Northern	29	287	10·1	2,591	14,848	17·5
Yorkshire and Humberside	34	413	8·2	4,230	26,086	16·2
East Midlands	33	410	8·0	3,205	22,397	14·3
East Anglia	17	236	7·2	1,557	12,927	12·0
Greater London	30	368	8·2	5,655	46,578	12·1
Rest of South East	56	826	6·8	7,143	59,052	12·1
South West	34	460	7·4	2,854	22,515	12·7
West Midlands	38	386	9·8	4,303	27,425	15·7
North West	50	468	10·7	6,554	39,014	16·8
Wales	19	227	8·4	2,343	15,074	15·5
Scotland	43	487	8·8	4,156	25,353	16·4
Great Britain	383	4,568	8·4	44,591	311,269	14·3

Road Safety

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he is taking to improve road safety.

Mr. Key: The Government have a target to reduce road casualties by one-third by the year 2000 taking the average for 1981-85 as the baseline. Our programme for achieving this was set out at length during the debate which took place on 15 May 1992. It includes a continuing programme of publicity campaigns aimed particularly at reducing the amount of drinking and driving and reducing speed in urban areas, the provision of grant to local authorities in support of highway engineering for road safety, continued negotiation of improved vehicle standards and measures to facilitate the enforcement of road traffic law.

In the last year we have published a new "Highway Code" and a policy document on speed. The Road Traffic Act 1991 has been commenced and a major experiment established into the rehabilitation of drink-drive offenders. A record £50 million of transport supplementary grant has been allocated to local safety schemes and more than fifty 20 mph zones have now been approved.

Provisional statistics for 1992 show that fatalities are 24 per cent. below the 1981-85 baseline and that the one-third reduction target has already been achieved for serious injuries, despite a 38 per cent. increase in traffic.

West Wellow Bypass

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will extend their deadline date for public consultation on the alternative routes for the A36 West Wellow bypass from 12 July to 12 August.

Mr. Norris: The public consultation period is being extended to 13 September.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration his Department or any agencies employed by him has given to a route south of West Wellow for the A36 bypass of the village.

Mr. Norris: The Department has considered route options for the proposed A36 West Wellow bypass south of the existing trunk road, but rejected them on environmental grounds.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of the environmental assessments undertaken by his Department or agencies in respect of the four alternative routes known as purple, green, yellow A and yellow B for the A36 bypass of West Wellow.

Mr. Norris: Environmental assessments undertaken for the route options are contained in three landscape reports, an ecological appraisal and a preliminary appraisal report. They are available for inspection at the public exhibitions currently being held in West Wellow.

Motor Vehicles

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the percentage annual change in road use by motorised vehicles in each year since 1979.

Mr. Key: The annual percentage change in road use by motorised vehicles in each year since 1979 is given in the table.

All motor vehicle traffic in Great Britain

Year	*All motor vehicle traffic*	
	(Billion vehicle Km)	*Percentage change on previous year*
1978	256·49	—
1979	255·87	−0·2
1980	271·93	6·3
1981	276·90	1·8
1982	284·46	2·7
1983	288·06	1·3
1984	303·09	5·2
1985	309·67	2·2
1986	325·30	5·0
1987	350·46	7·8
1988	375·70	7·2
1989	406·88	8·3
1990	410·84	1·0
1991	411·58	0·2
[1]1992	404·60	−1·7

[1] Provisional estimate.

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the number of licensed motor vehicles on the roads *(a)* in 1983 and *(b)* at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Key: The information requested was published recently by HMSO in "Vehicle Licensing Statistics 1992". This shows that the total number of motor vehicles licensed in Great Britain as at 31 December 1983 were

20,209,000. As at 31 December 1992, the latest year available, the number of licensed motor vehicles had increased by 23 per cent. to 24,851,000.

Trunk Roads

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what provision has been made for expenditure on trunk roads in each of the next three years.

Mr. Key: The provision for expenditure on trunk roads in England is £2,092 million in 1993-94, £2,151 million in 1994-95 and £2,059 million in 1995-96.

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total number of jobs involved in current highway projects on the trunk road network.

Mr. Key: Some 50 new construction schemes are under construction and many major maintenance projects are under way on the English trunk road network. The number of jobs on these sites varies from day to day. In addition, there are people working in the industries supplying aggregates, steel, communications equipment, and other materials. On the basis of comments by independent bodies, it is estimated that, each £30,000 of capital expenditure directly supports one job. On this basis, the £1,932 million we plan to spend on new construction and capital maintenance in 1993-94 will directly support 60,000 to 70,000 jobs, and a good many more besides in supplying industries.

London Underground

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what plans he has for the relief of traffic congestion on London Underground;

(2) what proposals he has to reduce passenger overcrowding on the London Underground.

Mr. Norris: London Transport and London Underground Ltd. are responsible for the management of the underground system, including decisions on measures to relieve overcrowding and congestion. Such measures currently include both improvements to the existing network such as the £750 million modernisation of the Central line and the £28 million modernisation of Bank/Monument station, and plans for new lines, notably the Jubilee line extension and crossrail.

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much central Government expenditure is allocated to improving safety standards on the London Underground.

Mr. Norris: The Government provide a block grant to London Transport—LT—as a whole. We do not allocate specific amounts either to London Underground Ltd—LUL—or to expenditure on improving safety standards. Decisions on such matters are taken by LT and LUL.

Light Rail Projects

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many light rail projects are planned in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Freeman: Local authorities are primarily responsible for initiating light rail projects, and I am aware of around 30 that are planning or considering such projects for their area. These are in addition to the schemes towards which the Government has provided resources, the Manchester Metrolink scheme, which opened last year, and the South Yorkshire Supertram scheme, which is under construction and the first phase of which is due to open in early 1994. The Government have also provided funds towards the development of the Midland Metro scheme.

Wheel Clamping

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the effect of wheel clamping on levels of illegal parking.

Mr. Key: Research carried out by the Road Research Laboratory indicates that wheel clamping on public roads significantly increases the degree of compliance with parking regulations, which in turn allows traffic to flow more freely.

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from motor vehicles in order to help fulfil the commitments the Government gave at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Mr. Key: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my right hon. Friend to the hon. Members for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) and for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) on 24 May, *Official Report*, columns *417-18*.

Birmingham Relief Road

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the implications for the tolling design of the Birmingham northern relief road of "Paying for Better Motorways", Cm. 2200.

Mr. Key: "Paying for Better Motorways" makes it clear that no decisions have been taken on whether to charge directly for the use of existing motorways. Legislation would be required for any form of charging. We see no need to revise the current plans for the Birmingham northern relief road. The private sector has already taken on responsibility for costs and risks associated with the scheme.

Road Surfaces

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made, in respect of each stretch of motorway and trunk road, of the likelihood of the road surface being damaged by hot weather; and, in respect of each, what repairs will be carried out and when.

Mr. Key: The standards and specifications used by the Department of Transport for the design and construction of all motorways and trunk roads make due allowance for the effect of hot weather. However, damage does sometimes occur in exceptional circumstances. In addition to normal monitoring, during periods of unusual weather conditions extra monitoring is undertaken. Problems are rectified as quickly as possible and in such a way as to cause minimum inconvenience to road users.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the cost of repair in respect of each stretch of motorway and trunk road of repairing damage caused, or likely to be caused, by defective concrete and reinforced steel construction; and what plans he has to undertake repair work to ensure minimum disruption to motorists.

Mr. Key: The Department of Transport spends some £16 million each year on the rehabilitation of concrete roads. This is mainly to rectify the effects of many years of wear and tear from heavy traffic; only a very small proportion of the work is to remedy defective materials and workmanship. Concrete roads are regularly inspected and any necessary repair work is carefully planned and co-ordinated to ensure minimum disruption to road users, by working at night, for example.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which stretches of *(a)* motorway and *(b)* trunk road, with the number of miles in each case, have been constructed with concrete and reinforced steel.

Mr. Key: Of the 250 miles of motorway with a concrete surface, about 65 miles are reinforced with steel. For all-purpose trunk roads, there are 210 miles of which 80 are reinforced. Many roads have concrete as part of the pavement but have a blacktop surface. Taking these into account, approximately 20 per cent. of motorways and 8 per cent. of all-purpose trunk roads have concrete as a part of the structural pavement layers. Roads with long—above 10 miles, but not necessarily continuous—lengths of concrete carriageway are:

	Lengths (miles)
M20 in Kent	38
M40 in Oxfordshire/Warwickshire	38
M11 in Essex	30
A12 in Essex	29
M25 in Surrey	22
M42 in Warwickshire	19
M27 in Hampshire	16
A1 in Nottinghamshire	16
M5 in Somerset	15
M6 in Lancashire	13
A45 in Suffolk	13
M2 in Kent	12
M25 in Essex	12

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give full details of the design specification required of contractors who *(a)* build and *(b)* repair roads; and what plans he has to review the specification required of the tenderer.

Mr. Key: Contractors involved in the construction and repair of the Department's roads are required to carry out their work in accordance with the specification for highway works which forms part of the manual of contract documents for highway works. The content is subject to continual review with the publication of an update approximately annually. Designs for road construction are based on standards set out in the design manual for roads and bridges. Copies of both documents are being made available in the Library of the House.

MV Tigris

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what response he has received from the Greek authorities in respect of representations made to them by his Department regarding the alleged dumping of coal residue in international waters west of Foula in 1992, by the MV Tigris; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The response from the Greek authorities received last month states that the competent Greek authorities have investigated the matter and questioned the master of the vessel. He confirmed that:

a. MV Tigris was on 13 May 1992 and at 1445 GMT in the position mentioned and the Captain was on the bridge;
b. A crew member was on the starboard side where he was piling coal dust after a clean up of the hold of the ship;
c. Competent officers under Captain's orders ensured that remainders of cargo were not shovelled into the sea;
d. The Captain-issued the order since the vessel was in a Special Area;
e. The crew member on the starboard side did not shovel coal dust over the side of the vessel.

The Greek authorities did not impose a penalty.

We remain concerned about this matter and are considering how to take it further.

Cyprus Turkish Airlines

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to prevent the traffic of Cyprus Turkish Airlines between Stansted and Heathrow.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 14 June 1993]:* If Cyprus Turkish Airlines were to fly to or from the United Kingdom they would require the permission of the Secretary of State under article 88 of the Air Navigation Order 1989. It is an offence to operate without this and an airline would be liable to prosecution.

No applications have been received from Cyprus Turkish Airlines.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Poverty Passports

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if Her Majesty's Government support the proposal by the President of the European Commission for the issue of poverty passports to enable disadvantaged EC citizens to claim a range of benefits in order to lift them out of poverty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: Disadvantage takes different forms in different countries and, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, it is accepted that action lies primarily with member states. Community-wide "poverty passports" would not, therefore, be appropriate. Mechanisms already exist to deal with the portability of benefits between member states.

War Pensioners

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what recent changes there have been to the treatment allowance available to war pensioners suffering from chronic illnesses; and how much was spent on treatment allowances for pensioners in 1991, 1992 and in 1993 to date.

Mr. Hague: Treatment allowance, which in effect brings a war pension up to the 100 per cent. rate, is payable where the pensioner is receiving treatment, in hospital or elsewhere, for his war-pensioned disablement. Legislation has been amended recently so that, from 12 April 1993, new awards of treatment allowance will be made only when the war pensioner incurs a loss of earnings as a result of the treatment. The Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions was consulted about this change.

Information on expenditure on treatment allowance is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Retirement Pensions

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of *(a)* men and *(b)* women in the latest year for which figures are available reached retirement age with entitlement to (i) the full basic state pension, (ii) some state earnings-related pension or additional pension, (iii) an occupational pension and (iv) a personal pension.

Mr. Hague: The information is not available in the form requested.

The available information regarding recipients of basic retirement pension and additional pension resident in Great Britain at 30 September 1992, the latest date for which figures are available, is in the table.

	Men aged 65 [1] *Per cent.*	*Women aged 60* [1] *Per cent.*
Full category A retirement pension	68·0	16·0
Full category B retirement pension (widow/widower)	—	1·5
Full category B retirement pension (married women)[2]	n/a	7·5
Notional additional pension[3]	71·5	32·0

[1] Figures expressed as percentages of the 1991 based population projections for mid-1992 rounded to the nearest 0·5 per cent. The following main categories of benefit recipients are not shown in the table:
People receiving pension at less than the full rate;
Women receiving pension partly on their own and partly on their husband's contributions;
People receiving invalidity benefit post-pensionable age.

[2] The standard rate of category B retirement pension payable to a married woman is approximately 60 per cent. of the full category A rate.

[3] The figures relate to notional entitlement to additional pension with retirement pension prior to any contracted-out deduction in respect of guaranteed minimum pension or protected rights payment arising from membership of a contracted-out pension scheme or a personal pension scheme used in place of the additional pension. The numbers therefore include cases where only guaranteed minimum pension or protected rights is in payment.

In 1989, the most recent year for which figures are available, it is estimated that 66 per cent. of men aged 65 to 69, and 36 per cent. of women aged 60 to 64, had entitlement to some occupational pension. Information on numbers of men and women reaching retirement age with a personal pension is not available.

Income Support

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost in a full year of restoring income support entitlement to those aged 16 and 17 years.

Mr. Burt: Information is not available to calculate the cost of restoring entitlement to income support for 16 and 17-year-olds.

Copenhagen Conference

Ms Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the level of British Government participation in the conference in Copenhagen organised by the Danish EC presidency on 3 and 4 June, entitled, "Fighting Against Social Exclusion—A Challenge to the 1990s"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: The British Government was represented at this conference by two officials from the policy group in the Department.

Disability Benefits

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many claims have been received to date by his Department for *(a)* compensation, *(b)* an ex-gratia payment or *(c)* both from people who claimed disability living allowance, attendance allowance or mobility allowance on or after 3 February 1992; how many in each category were (i) accepted or (ii) refused; and what is the total cost to his Department for such payments over this period;

(2) how many people are expected to receive a special compensatory payment under the special arrangements for people who claimed disability living allowance, attendance allowance or mobility allowance on or after 3 February 1992 in total; how many of those will receive *(a)* £10, *(b)* £20, *(c)* £30, *(d)* £40, *(e)* £50, *(f)* £60, *(g)* £70 and *(h)* over £70 compensation; and what is the expected overall cost to his Department;

(3) how many people whose attendance allowance or mobility allowance *(a)* came up for renewal or *(b)* was being reviewed on or after 3 February 1992 experienced interruption in their benefit for a period exceeding three months; and how many of these have been awarded compensation;

(4) how many people who claimed disability living allowance, attendance allowance or mobility allowance between 3 February 1992 and 31 March 1993 would have been eligible for compensation had the new compensation arrangements linking the scheme to Benefits Agency performance targets been brought into effect from 3 February 1992.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance and attendance allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Keith Bradley, dated 14 June 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security about compensation and ex gratia payments for people who have claimed Disability Living Allowance (DLA), Attendance Allowance (AA) and Mobility Allowance (MobA). I will deal with each of your points in turn.

Firstly, I should explain the effect of the revised arrangements and special retrospective scheme, which was recently announced.

Until 1 April 1993, compensation, for delays in payment of benefit, is only considered when the delay in payment of benefit in new claims was at least 12 months. The delay had to have been caused by official error and the arrears of benefit had to be £50 or more.

From 1 April 1993, the date from which compensation may be paid has been brought forward, whilst the other criteria remain the same. Compensation will be considered where a payment of benefit is delayed for 6 months beyond the target set for clearing the bulk of claims.

In recognition that this improvement will be too late for people who claimed DLA last year and suffered unacceptable delay due to the exceptional problems following its introduction, a special compensatory payment will be made.

This will apply to those people who made a claim to DLA, or MobA on or after 3 February 1992, were paid before 1 April 1993 and suffered a delay in the payment of benefit of more than 8 months. Payment will be made at the rate of £10 per month for each month in excess of this 8 month period.

The number of people who have received payments of compensation for late payment of benefit on or after 3 February, having claimed DLA, AA or MobA, is 186 at a cost of £25,779·84. The number of people who have received an ex gratia payment, made in respect of, for example, telephone bills is 162 at a cost of £9,316·96. These numbers will however include claims to benefit made prior to 3 February 1992. In the same period 129 people were refused a compensation payment and 74 people were refused an ex gratia payment. We have no record of people who claimed both. These figures are provisional and may be subject to amendment.

It is not possible to predict how many people will receive each of the amounts you quoted by way of special compensatory payments. It is anticipated that some 80,000 to 90,000 people will benefit from the scheme at a cost of around £3 million.

Arrangements for compensation for those people who have experienced an interruption in the payment of their benefit exceeding three months remain the same. These people would originally have made a claim to AA or MobA, which at renewal would have been paid as one of the components of DLA. Since 3 February 1992, 141 people experienced an interruption of this duration or more and have received a payment of compensation. The amount of compensation paid is £5,204·43. These figures are provisional and may be subject to amendment.

Requests for review are not subject to this three-month period, which applies to interruptions in payment. They are subject to the same period as new claims.

The information on how many people would have been eligible for compensation, had the new arrangements been brought into effect from 3 February 1992, is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. However these claims would have been subject to consideration of a payment of compensation where payment of benefit had been delayed for six months beyond the target date set for clearing the bulk of claims. In addition, the delay would have to have been caused by official error and the arrears of benefit would have had to be £50 or more.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report*. A copy will also be placed in the Library.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people were claiming sickness or invalidity benefit in each month in each of the last three years *(a)* in the area covered by the Wales area directorate and *(b)* in each of the districts in Wales.

Mr. Scott: The administration of sickness benefit and invalidity benefit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Nick Ainger, dated 14 June 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many people were claiming Sickness or Invalidity Benefit in each month in each of the last three years (a) in the area covered by the Wales Area Directorate and (b) in each of the districts in Wales.

The information has been obtained in the format requested. The statistics for the number of people claiming Sickness or Invalidity Benefit at the last working day of each month of the last three years in the area covered by the Wales Area Directorate (Wales as part of the former Wales and South West Region prior to April 1991) are provided on the table. The statistics for each of the districts in Wales are provided on appendix 1.

Last working day of	*Number of people claiming invalidity benefit (IVB)*	*Number of people claiming sickness benefit (SB)*	*Total number of people claiming SB and IVB*
April 1990	[1]—	[1]—	171,767
May 1990	[1]—	[1]—	171,716
June 1990	[1]—	[1]—	171,644
July 1990	[1]—	[1]—	173,030
August 1990	[1]—	[1]—	173,258
September 1990	[1]—	[1]—	173,387
October 1990	[1]—	[1]—	174,612
November 1990	[1]—	[1]—	175,662
December 1990	[1]—	[1]—	176,918
January 1991	[1]—	[1]—	178,524
February 1991	[1]—	[1]—	179,758
March 1991	[1]—	[1]—	180,456
April 1991	[1]—	[1]—	182,037
May 1991	148,915	32,381	181,296
June 1991	150,016	32,808	182,824
July 1991	150,676	33,699	184,375
August 1991	151,462	34,563	186,025
September 1991	152,129	34,374	186,503
October 1991	153,838	33,982	187,820
November 1991	154,320	34,367	188,687
December 1991	156,002	34,218	190,220
January 1992	156,984	35,215	192,199
February 1992	158,327	35,309	193,636
March 1992	159,225	36,187	195,412
April 1992	159,836	35,951	195,787
May 1992	160,937	36,101	197,038
June 1992	162,174	36,754	198,928
July 1992	162,668	37,469	200,137
August 1992	164,479	36,862	201,341
September 1992	165,462	37,559	203,021
October 1992	167,218	38,969	206,187
November 1992	168,443	39,654	208,097
December 1992	169,737	40,929	210,666
January 1993	170,369	40,807	211,176
February 1993	171,761	41,729	213,490
March 1993	173,066	41,679	214,745

[1]Note SB and IVB claimants were counted together up to April 1991.

It should also be noted that the figures include customers who may have claimed Sickness Benefit and Invalidity Benefit but who may not be in receipt of the benefit. These cases will be "credits only" cases where the person is registered sick and receiving National Insurance credits, also cases where termination action has not been completed. The figures are based on a 100 per cent. clerical count of cases in the local office and are therefore subject to amendment.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

Appendix 1
April 1990 to March 1991

District	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March
Gwyneddigion	9,364	9,368	9,425	9,458	9,459	9,560	9,677	9,816	9,901	9,900	10,193	10,078
Mid Wales and Maelor	8,896	8,847	9,005	9,004	9,062	9,197	9,246	9,440	9,492	9,623	9,881	9,895
Cynon Merthyr and Rhymney Valley	22,107	22,000	21,785	22,095	22,188	22,225	22,437	22,465	22,725	22,852	23,263	23,412
South Glamorgan	16,136	16,091	16,123	16,620	16,675	16,472	16,550	16,604	16,826	17,085	17,138	17,252
West Wales	18,422	18,376	18,526	18,676	18,660	18,589	18,606	18,879	19,100	19,489	19,435	19,803
Swansea	15,965	16,042	16,034	16,189	16,285	16,306	16,360	16,421	16,559	16,672	16,774	17,003
North Wales Coast	12,002	11,970	12,094	12,188	12,311	12,302	12,463	12,521	12,534	12,879	12,968	12,922
Ogwr Afan Nedd	21,370	21,704	21,214	21,329	21,253	21,617	21,690	21,995	22,179	21,789	22,346	22,456
Taff Rhondda	17,380	17,354	17,367	17,460	17,429	17,482	17,520	17,623	17,636	18,146	18,040	17,911
South Gwent and Islwyn	13,995	14,098	14,446	14,455	14,408	14,226	14,181	14,197	14,158	13,992	13,571	13,621
North Gwent and Brecon	16,130	15,866	15,625	15,556	15,528	15,411	15,882	15,701	15,808	16,177	16,149	16,103

April 1991 to March 1992

District	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March
Gwyneddigion	10,275	10,204	10,416	10,386	10,434	10,553	10,761	10,855	10,931	11,055	11,237	11,321
Mid Wales and Maelor	9,901	9,818	9,869	9,992	10,067	10,208	10,224	10,369	10,422	10,457	10,714	10,854
Cynon Merthyr and Rhymney Valley	23,427	23,495	23,967	23,895	24,417	24,373	24,695	24,569	24,460	24,521	25,191	25,358
South Glamorgan	17,605	17,378	17,188	17,493	17,512	17,595	17,607	17,823	17,931	18,262	18,229	18,513
West Wales	20,017	19,672	19,751	19,494	19,951	19,973	20,127	20,365	20,535	20,728	20,880	20,988
Swansea	17,127	17,231	17,419	17,614	17,656	17,744	17,854	17,958	17,985	18,202	18,242	18,518
North Wales Coast	13,010	13,149	13,250	13,375	13,532	13,694	13,862	13,912	14,070	14,103	14,273	14,329
Ogwr Afan Nedd	22,600	22,007	22,329	22,798	22,913	22,800	22,620	22,849	23,201	23,533	23,458	23,860
Taff Rhondda	18,068	18,244	18,180	18,321	18,468	18,311	18,637	18,635	18,925	19,259	19,276	19,210
South Gwent and Islwyn	13,779	13,687	13,924	14,164	14,178	14,119	14,261	14,413	14,996	15,117	14,688	14,977
North Gwent and Brecon	16,228	16,411	16,531	16,843	16,897	17,133	17,173	16,939	17,185	17,421	17,448	17,484

April 1992 to March 1993

District	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March
Gwyneddigion	11,003	11,250	11,164	11,255	11,310	11,571	11,666	11,747	11,961	11,978	12,111	12,421
Mid Wales and Maelor	11,069	11,153	10,831	11,534	11,625	11,653	11,851	12,143	12,295	12,167	12,271	12,197
Cynon Merthyr and Rhymney Valley	25,387	25,998	25,993	26,051	25,917	26,191	27,035	27,478	27,672	28,041	28,258	28,111
South Glamorgan	18,613	18,598	18,857	19,063	19,260	19,453	19,539	19,807	19,977	20,172	20,318	20,478
West Wales	21,389	21,340	21,506	21,635	21,874	22,062	22,346	22,341	22,779	22,705	23,188	23,080
Swansea	18,862	19,057	19,185	19,236	19,420	19,748	19,869	20,006	20,215	20,389	20,655	20,818
North Wales Coast	14,467	14,543	14,561	14,784	14,859	14,996	14,996	14,996	15,534	15,560	15,560	15,853
Ogwr Afan Nedd	23,648	23,731	23,997	23,338	23,392	23,354	24,442	24,705	25,121	24,786	24,957	25,532
Taff Rhondda	19,188	19,105	19,305	19,782	19,955	20,040	19,899	19,944	20,279	20,533	20,579	20,953
South Gwent and Islwyn	15,150	15,248	15,554	15,446	15,501	15,458	15,804	16,025	15,941	16,184	16,284	16,387
North Gwent and Brecon	17,011	17,015	17,975	18,013	18,228	18,504	18,748	18,913	18,892	18,661	19,309	18,915

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in Wales received *(a)* sickness benefit and *(b)* invalidity benefit in (i) March 1990 and (ii) March 1993.

Mr. Scott: The administration of sickness and invalidity benefit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Barry Jones, dated 14 June 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many people in Wales received (a) sickness benefit and (b) invalidity benefit in (i) March 1990 and (ii) March 1993.

Figures are not yet available showing the number of recipients of Invalidity Benefit (IVB) and Sickness Benefit (SB) in Wales in March 1993. However, I am able to tell you that as at 30 March 1990 10,300 people in Wales were in receipt of SB and 137,500 people were in receipt of IVB.

This information has been obtained from a one per cent sample of claimants.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Performance Targets

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many people working in public services now have their remuneration linked to performance targets as a result of the citizens charter programme.

Mr. David Davis: Information on the number of public servants with their remuneration linked to performance targets is not held centrally.

As the citizens charter first report: 1992 (Cm 2101) explained, performance-related pay is progressively becoming established as a feature of public sector pay schemes. Performance pay schemes cover half a million civil servants; discretionary allowances are available for primary school teachers; 40 per cent. of local authorities have performance-related pay schemes; London Underground managers have a proportion of their pay linked to performance; quality of service affects London Executive Board members' pay by up to 35 per cent.; and British Rail's performance against quality of service objectives affects all executive board members' pay by up to 20 per cent.

ENVIRONMENT

Environment Summit

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the events, and give full details, scheduled to take place at the environment summit in Manchester in September which specifically involve children; and on what basis children will be invited to participate.

Mr. Yeo: The children's environment summit will be held in Manchester on Saturday 18 September. The children attending will be invited to put forward ideas for a long-term environmental initiative.

A competition will be launched later this month to select 60 children aged between eight and 15 to participate.

Climate Change

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the organisations which responded to his departmental consultation document on climate change; and what action he has taken in response to the comments received.

Mr. Yeo: We received more than 250 responses to the discussion document: "Climate Change—Our National Programme for CO_2 Emissions." A list of the respondents has been placed in the Library of the House. Copies of all the responses have been placed in the library of my Department. They have all been read very carefully and will be taken into account in finalising the national CO_2 programme. The programme will be published later this year.

Council Tax Registers

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those public utilities, organisations or companies which currently have direct access to council tax registers.

Mr. Baldry: None of these bodies has rights of access to information about the state of a council tax valuation list going beyond those available to all persons under section 28 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to extend the scope of access to council tax registers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend has no plans to extend access to information in council tax valuation lists.

Homeless Elderly

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the night shelters or hostels within the Greater London area that are specifically allocated for use by homeless elderly people within the Greater London area.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not held centrally, although the Department part-funds resource information services to publish an annual London hostels directory, which lists hostel accommodation in London. The entry for each hostel shows, inter alia, any age restrictions on residents. I am placing copies of the directory in the Library.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what survey has been undertaken by his Department on the welfare of elderly homeless people sleeping rough in London during the first three months of 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The Department has not undertaken such a survey. The age breakdown of people sleeping rough in central London is given in the report of independent research into the effectiveness of the rough sleepers initiative, commissioned by the Department from Geoffrey Randall and Susan Brown, entitled "The Rough Sleepers Initiative: an Evaluation", published in January 1993. Copies of this report are in the Library.

Landfill Management

Mr. Henry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to examine the issue of criminal liability of private sector companies which take over the management of local authority landfill sites under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, and the Water Act 1989, which then cause pollution as a direct result of waste deposited in the past.

Mr. Yeo: We have no plans to examine the issue of criminal liability in these circumstances.

However, my right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State announced on 24 March 1993 at column 633 a wide-ranging review by an interdepartmental group of officials, under the chairmanship of his Department, of the problems associated with contaminative uses of land. Among the issues to be covered by this review will be civil liability for contamination.

Mobile Home Owners

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to amend the Planning and Compensation Act 1991 to extend compensation payable under it to mobile home owners affected by motorways completed in the last 10 years.

Mr. Baldry: Under a provision inserted by the Planning and Compensation Act 1991, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport intends later this year to make regulations enabling highway authorities to make payments to the owners of mobile homes which are affected by a specified level of noise arising from the construction or use of new or altered roads. The powers

apply only to cases where the works giving rise to noise came into use no earlier than 12 months before commencement of the provision. The regulations which my right hon. Friend proposes to make will accordingly apply to new or altered road schemes which first came into use on or after 25 September 1990. We are not persuaded of the case for any extension in the scope of the powers.

Water Prices

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the heads of the regional water companies to discuss the basis for water price structure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: My right hon. Friend's predecessors have from time to time met chairmen of the water companies. The basis for restrictions on water charges is set out in the water companies' instruments of appointment, compendia of which are available in the Library. Under the Water Industry Act 1991, the Director General of Water Services has the duty to set limits to the prices companies may charge. The director general has published a number of consultation papers concerning his approach to setting price limits at the first full review in 1994 which will take effect from 1 April 1995. Under section 2 of the Water Industry Act 1991, the director general must enable companies to obtain the funds to finance their duties while protecting the interests of their customers.

Radon Gas

Sir Roger Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what grants are available to help householders pay the cost of remedial work in their homes to prevent contamination by radon gas; how many grants he estimates have been made; and how many houses are estimated to be at risk.

Mr. Yeo: Local authorities have powers under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 to award discretionary renovation grants to help home owners with radon remedial measures. Information on the number of grants given for this purpose is not collected by the Department. The National Radiological Protection Board estimates that 100,000 houses are above the Government action level.

Company Relocations, Merseyside

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many companies from outside Merseyside have relocated within the Merseyside development corporation area since 1991.

Mr. Baldry: A recent survey carried out on behalf of MDC has indicated that approximately 200 companies have been established within MDC's area since 1991. Ten of these companies moved into MDC owned premises from outside Merseyside. In addition, there have been relocations by three Government organisations into the MDC area.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the cost to Government of relocating companies to the Merseyside development corporation area since 1991.

Mr. Baldry: It is not possible to put a figure on cost to Government in relocating companies to the MDC area since 1991 as much of the information is commercial in confidence. However, since 1991 MDC has given grant assistance of more than £3 million to companies within MDC's area, thereby creating or retaining jobs.

Red List Substances

Mr. Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the United Kingdom input figures, and their dates, for each of the 23 red list substances, which are to be used as the baseline for the Government's commitment to reduce riverine, estuarial and direct coastal aqueous discharges to the sea by 50 per cent.; and if he will disaggregate inputs of each substance to the North sea and other coastal waters of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Yeo: The available information is contained in "The Implementation of the Ministerial Declaration of the Second International Conference on the Protection of the North Sea," published by my Department in February 1990, a copy of which is in the Library of the House. Discharges of red list substances in Scotland and Northern Ireland are matters for the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Northern Ireland respectively.

Mr. Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest available figures relating to riverine, estuarial and direct coastal discharges of the red list substances; and what are their dates, disaggregating the data to provide input figures of each substance to the North sea and other coastal waters of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Yeo: The latest available information is contained in "Controlling the Inputs of Persistent Chemicals to Marine Waters from Land-Based Sources", a paper by the chief scientist of the National Rivers Authority given to the British Association for the Advancement of Science at its Southampton meeting in August 1992. A copy of this is in the Library of the House. Discharges of red list substances in Scotland and Northern Ireland are matters for the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Northern Ireland respectively.

Forestry

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Government will publish their response to the Environment Select Committee's first report of the current Session on "Foresty and the Environment"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The Government are today publishing their response to the Environment Select Committee's report on "Forestry and the Environment". We welcome the Committee's report as a valuable contribution to the debate on this important topic.

The Government welcome the Committee's recognition of the important role of forestry in meeting a wide range of environmental, economic and social objectives. The Government also welcome the Committee's support for the continued expansion of forestry cover.

In taking forward the relevant policies, the aim of the Government is to ensure that encouragement of increased woodland cover complements the goal of conserving and enhancing the environment. The statement published by the Forestry Commission on behalf of forestry Ministers

in September 1991 set out the broad policy framework: the present response to the Committee's report highlights various developments which have occurred since then. These include the publication of additional environmental guidelines with which applicants for the woodland grant scheme have to comply, the publication last year of guidance to local authorities on the preparation of indicative forestry strategies to assist landowners and others drawing up new planting schemes, and provision by the Forestry Commission of a public register of grant applications to improve the public's awareness of forestry planting proposals.

In the wider policy context, the response confirms the Government's commitment to publish by the end of this year a national plan for implementing the statement of forest principles agreed last year at the Earth summit in Rio de Janiero. The Forestry Commission is co-ordinating the preparation of this plan, and will seek the views of non-governmental organisations before it is completed. The plan will set out the arrangements for implementing forestry policy, including the delivery of multiple objectives in forests throughout the United Kingdom.

The response points to the Government's current review of the effectiveness of existing incentives for forestry investment and options for the ownership and management of the Forestry Commission's woodlands with a view to possible changes which would improve the effectiveness of the delivery of the Government's forestry policy objectives.

The response announces the Government's intention to review existing consultation arrangements for planting and felling proposals; and it confirms that a review of current procedures to maintain public access where appropriate to forests and woodlands sold by the Forestry Commission as part of its disposals programme will take place later this year.

The response also announces the Forestry Commission's intention to devote a greater proportion of its resources to the community and national forest initiatives, and to undertake a study of the extent of neglected and derelict woodlands with a view to making recommendations on any additional action required.

Copies of the Government response are being laid before the House and will be available in the Library.

Displaced Persons

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the special financial assistance to be given to local authorities in respect of displaced persons from the former Yugoslavia and unaccompanied refugee and asylum-seeking children.

Mr. Curry: Financial assistance is to be given to local authorities under two special grant schemes. Details are contained in "Special Grant Report (No. 8)" which has been laid before the House of Commons for approval. These two grant schemes will provide support to those authorities which are most affected by the influx of displaced persons from the former Yugoslavia and by the pressure on local services caused by the arrival at major ports of entry of refugee and asylum-seeking children from other parts of the world.

Local Government Staff Commission

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to issue policy guidance to the Local Government Staff Commission (England).

Mr. Baldry: I am placing in the Library a copy of the policy guidance which we are issuing to the Local Government Staff Commission (England).

The Government recognise the anxieties which many local authority staff have about their future when reorganisation of local government in the shire counties takes place over the next few years.

We are keen to ensure that the staff commission looks carefully at all the staff issues involved. The policy guidance provides a framework for the commission to consider the complex arrangements relating to staff which will need to be resolved by local authorities.

The commission will focus specifically on mechanisms for staff transfer to, and recruitment by, the new authorities, and on the scope for any prior consideration arrangements for staff whose posts are lost in reorganisation.

Over the coming months, the staff commission will be talking extensively to local governments at all levels: the local authority associations, individual local authorities directly affected—their staff and their representatives—and listening to their views and concerns.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce a de minimis threshold to exempt smaller local authorities from compulsory competitive tendering for construction-related and corporate services.

Mr. Curry: Competition provides many benefits to local authorities: better managed services, higher quality work and significant financial savings. However, the Government recognise that CCT involves additional administrative requirements, which need to be taken into account.

For this reason we introduced de-minimis thresholds for the services subject to CCT under the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980 and the Local Government Act 1988. Where the amount of work falls below these thresholds, authorities are not obliged to seek competitive tenders—though they can do so voluntarily if they wish.

During our joint discussions on the implementation of white-collar CCT, local authority representatives have proposed that de-minimis thresholds should similarly be adopted for professional and corporate services.

I have considered these comments, and accept the principle. I have asked my officials to discuss with local authority representatives the appropriate form and amounts of the thresholds which will achieve broadly the same objectives as those thresholds already in place for manual services. I have also accepted the argument that a local authority needs a satisfactory staffing level to perform adequately the core client roles which may not be suitable for competitive tendering.

White collar CCT covers a range of different services. The deminimis thresholds adopted will need to reflect these differences. For some services, a threshold based on the total value of the service may be appropriate, for others

one based on the number of staff employed, or a combination of the two, may better meet authorities' needs. I am anxious that we consider all options.

I will make further announcements on the proposed thresholds for individual services in due course.

As with the existing services, local authorities will of course be free to tender services below threshold levels voluntarily. Authorities should take every opportunity to improve services and reduce costs through market testing.

Meantime, I hope this early announcement about the decision in principle to adopt deminimis thresholds for the white collar services will be helpful to local authorities.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library copies of the written submission appeals submitted by Castle Point borough council, Harlow district council and Gloucestershire county council against his proposed cap of their budgets.

Mr. Baldry: I have today placed copies of these documents in the Library.

Executive Bodies

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to whom each executive non-departmental public body sponsored by his Department is statutorily or legally responsible; and which such bodies are subject to *(a)* surcharge, *(b)* investigation by the Parliamentary Commissioner, *(c)* scrutiny by the Audit Commission or National Audit Office, *(d)* the statutory provisions for open Government which apply to local authorities, *(e)* performance indicators, and *(f)* any provisions under the citizens charters.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 10 June 1993]:* The Department of the Environment currently sponsors 29 executive non-departmental public bodies, details of which are in "Public Bodies" and the Department's 1993 annual report (Cm. 2207). The functions and responsibilities of each non-departmental public body are specified in its founding legislation. I appoint and specify the terms of service of the members of the board of each non-departmental public body and am responsible for non-departmental public bodies' use of resources and the general framework within which they are required to operate. The chief executive of most non-departmental public bodies is designated as the non-departmental public body's accounting officer and, together with the departmental accounting officer, is liable to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to account for the use of public funds.

(a) The concept of surcharge as used in the Local Government Finance Act 1982 applies only to local authorities.

(b) The non-departmental public bodies subject to investigation by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration are:

Commission for the New Towns (excluding housing functions)
Countryside Commission
Housing Corporation
Local Government Commission
London Residuary Body
National Rivers Authority (excluding flood defence functions)
Nature Conservancy Council for England (English Nature)
Rural Development Commission
United Kingdom Eco-Labelling Board
Urban Development Corporations (excluding town and country planning functions)

(c) The Comptroller and Auditor General, as head of the National Audit Office, is the statutory external auditor of:

Audit Commission
Countryside Commission
Nature Conservancy Council for England
Joint Nature Conservation Committee
Rural Development Commission

The Comptroller and Auditor General also has a statutory right to inspect the books of the National Rivers Authority and, by agreement, those of other NDPBs. Under the provisions of the National Audit Act 1983 he may also carry out examinations into the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of NDPBs for which he is the external auditor of which receive more than half their income from public funds.

The Audit Commission is the statutory external auditor of the London Pensions Fund Authority and the London residuary body.

(d) The provisions of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 apply only to those local authorities specified in the Act.

(e) As a matter of policy, all NDPBs are required to develop and use performance indicators both for their own internal management and to inform the public about their work.

(f) All NDPBs are required to apply the principles of the citizens charter in their dealings with the public.

Essex Coast

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to make an announcement about the Essex coast protection scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: I have been asked to reply.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has overall policy responsibility for coast protection in England. Grant aid is available under the Coast Protection Act 1949 to maritime district councils for carrying out works to protect land from erosion or encroachment by the sea. Such works must be technically sound, economically worthwhile and environmentally acceptable to qualify for approval and grant aid. There are a number of works currently under construction or consideration by the maritime district councils in Essex.

SCOTLAND

Energy Saving Trust

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many meetings he has had with the chairman and chief executive of the Energy Saving Trust, what resources his Department has committed to the trust to date; and if he will make a statement on the progress made in achieving the aims of the trust to date in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 9 June 1993]:* The prime responsibility for promoting energy efficiency rests with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment who provides support for the Energy

Saving Trust. It would be a matter for the trust to make any progress report. Meantime there has been no meeting between either the chairman or chief executive of the trust and the Secretary of State for Scotland.

HIV/AIDS and Drug Abuse

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the allocations for each health board in respect of *(a)* misuse in drugs services and *(b)* HIV/AIDS service operations in (i) 1993-94, (ii) 1992-93 and (iii) 1991-92.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* The allocation of moneys to each health board in Scotland for drugs and HIV/AIDS services is shown in the tables.

Drugs

	1991-92	*1992-93*	*1993-94*
Argyll and Clyde	78,416	96,381	100,000
Ayrshire and Arran	170,703	189,572	195,000
Borders	18,387	23,862	25,000
Dumfries and Galloway	30,068	34,377	37,000
Fife	57,865	70,395	75,000
Forth Valley	53,755	56,094	63,000
Grampian	101,562	102,863	107,000
Greater Glasgow	777,043	772,956	788,000
Highland	43,156	46,949	36,000
Lanarkshire	90,205	109,480	115,000
Lothian	616,989	629,456	640,000
Orkney	3,353	4,876	5,500
Shetland	4,002	5,404	6,500
Tayside	259,762	260,795	265,000
Western Isles	5,841	8,650	9,000
Total	2,311,107	2,412,110	2,467,000

HIV/AIDS

£ millions

	1991-92	*1992-93*	*1993-94*
Argyll and Clyde	468,000	592,328	620,729
Ayrshire and Arran	250,000	460,032	543,936
Borders	139,550	147,846	153,000
Dumfries and Galloway	229,000	207,767	235,222
Fife	438,070	465,235	481,773
Forth Valley	402,000	473,000	449,000
Grampian	648,000	1,233,067	1,235,000
Greater Glasgow	3,959,000	4,188,787	4,559,968
Highland	295,400	288,595	324,940
Lanarkshire	422,000	657,667	708,000
Lothian	[1]7,856,000	7,592,400	7,300,000
Orkney	5,000	26,739	28,454
Shetland	25,000	30,892	33,392
Tayside	2,361,000	2,589,583	2,643,000
Western Isles	42,000	47,062	47,062
State Hospital	—	—	34,000
Total	17,540,000	[2]19,001,000	19,397,476

[1] This figure includes a capital payment of £542,000.
[2] Includes £500,000 to enable health boards to implement recommendations of the ministerial AIDS task force.

Miscarriages

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what provision he has made to help those who have suffered miscarriage;

(2) whether he will provide guidance on best practice for hospitals to help those suffering a miscarriage or recurrent miscarriage.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 14 June 1993]:* Grant aid is provided towards the core costs of the Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society (SANDS) and also to assist it to develop a self-help network providing support to bereaved parents, their families and friends.

The SANDS publication "Miscarriage, Stillbirth and Neonatal Death. Guidelines for Professionals"; the Scottish Health Service Advisory Council report "Everybody's Death Should Matter to Somebody; the Care of the Dying in Scotland" and the Department of Health publication "Welfare of Children and Young People in Hospital", all of which include good practice guidance for the care of those who have suffered a miscarriage, were issued to health boards and health and social care professionals during 1991. Guidance leaflets published by the Miscarriage Association and Support After Termination for Abnormality (SATFA) have also been recommended for use by NHS professional staff.

Counselling of bereaved parents or families is, of course, included in the curriculum for medical and nursing education.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of pregnancies end in miscarriage; and what is the ratio of miscarriages to live births in *(a)* Scotland as a whole and *(b)* each of the health board areas.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 14 June 1993]:* The information for known pregnancies in 1991, the latest year for which figures are available, is as follows:

Health board of residence	*All pregnancies*[1]	*Spontaneous abortions (miscarriage)*	*Per cent.*	*Ratio spontaneous losses: live births*
Argyll and Clyde	7,368	950	12·9	1:5·9
Ayrshire and Arran	6,376	799	12·5	1:6·1
Borders	1,649	207	12·6	1:6·1
Dumfries and Galloway	2,293	255	11·1	1:7·0
Fife	5,837	606	10·4	1:7·2
Forth Valley	4,552	460	10·1	1:7·8
Grampian	9,213	1,078	11·7	1:6·3
Greater Glasgow	16,883	2,160	12·8	1:5·9
Highland	3,513	406	11·6	1:6·5
Lanarkshire	9,564	1,094	11·4	1:7·0
Lothian	13,740	1,604	11·7	1:6·2
Tayside	6,735	634	9·4	1:7·7
Orkney	298	36	12·1	1:6·6
Shetland	392	44	11·2	1:7·4
Western Isles	394	35	8·9	1:9·4

Health board of residence	All pregnancies[1]	Spontaneous abortions (miscarriage)	Per cent.	Ratio spontaneous losses: live births
Resident elsewhere but miscarried in Scotland	119	119	—	—
SCOTLAND	88,926	10,487	11·8	1:6·4

[1] Includes births (live and still), spontaneous and therapeutic abortions.

Infertility

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps are taken to ensure health boards are provided with guidance on the provision of infertility treatment and counselling.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 14 June 1993]:* Good practice guidance and advice on the organisation and management of all aspects of infertility treatment, including counselling, is contained in the National Medical Advisory Committee's report on infertility services in Scotland, which was published on 10 March. This report has been issued to health boards and commended to them for implementation.

Guidance to licensed centres on the provision of treatment, again covering counselling, is also contained in the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority's code of practice.

Electoral Registration Statistics

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the latest estimates of those aged 17 years and over, plus 63 per cent. of those aged 16 years, for each district council area and parliamentary constituency, together in each case with the equivalent year's electoral registration figures, also expressed as a percentage of these population estimates.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 14 June 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave on 9 February, at columns *516-17*.

Health Staff

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* district nurses, *(b)* community midwives, *(c)* health visitors, *(d)* community psychiatric nurses and *(e)* practice nurses were employed in the NHS in Scotland in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* The information requested is shown in the table:

NHS Staff: WTE for selected groups at 30 September 1988-1992

	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
District nurses[1]	1,190·5	1,226·4	1,211·5	1,713·4	1,691·8
Community midwives	172·4	194·0	208·2	276·7	272·7
Health visitors[1]	1,517·9	1,559·6	1,508·6	1,546·2	1,497·3
Community psychiatric nurses	n/a	n/a	n/a	342·6	356·3
Practice nurses[2]	205·2	295·3	583·5	646·8	743·6

[1] Data include registered and enrolled nurses working in district nursing/health visiting but not qualified as district nurses or health visitors.
[2] Data for 1988-91 are at 1 April whereas that for 1992 is at 1 October.
n/a = Data not available.

There are also combined duty staff as below	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Health visitor/district nurse	3·0	3·0	7·0	31·9	30·2
Health visitor/district nurse—community midwife	121·3	113·7	114·7	134·2	127·7
District nurse/community midwife	447·7	438·3	415·3	359·8	350·7
Health visitor/community midwife	15·0	19·0	23·3	39·0	38·1

Enterprise Zones

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many jobs have been *(a)* created and *(b)* lost in each of the enterprise zones on an annual basis; and how many jobs were lost in the area of each enterprise zone in each of the three years before its creation.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 8 June 1993]:* Comprehensive information on job losses and redundancies is not held centrally. The information on jobs created and lost on enterprise zones is not available in the form requested. However, following is the information available on net job creation in each of the Scottish enterprise zones (and which takes account of job losses in the zone):

Enterprise zone	Date of designation	Estimated net job creation since designation
Clydebank	August 1981	3,700
Invergordon	October 1983	700
Tayside	January 1984	3,700
Inverclyde	March 1989	[1]800

[1] Revised figure based on recent survey of businesses. Includes 76 which were in the zone at the date of its establishment; excludes jobs expected to be created by Mimtec Services Ltd at Faulds Park.

Cervical Cancer

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many women aged *(a)* 20 to 40 years, *(b)* 41 to 60 years and *(c)* 61 years and over (i) have had cervical cancer diagnosed, (ii) have died from cervical cancer and (iii) have undergone treatment and survived, in each of the past seven years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 8 June 1993]:* The information requested is detailed in the table:

Cancer of the cervix in Scotland

Year	*All registrations*	*Hospital registrations*	*Deaths*	*One-year survival rate*	*Three-year survival rate*
Age <40					
1985	129	129	24	0·93	0·85
1986	129	129	31	0·94	0·80
1987	120	120	23	0·98	0·83
1988	144	143*	30	0·89	0·78
1989	88	88	11	0·91	—
1990	134	134	5	—	—
1991	127	127	—	—	—
Age 40-59					
1985	150	150	58	0·83	0·66
1986	158	158	59	0·85	0·70
1987	159	158	53	0·82	0·69
1988	176	175	44	0·87	0·73
1989	142	140	33	0·79	—
1990	187	186	4	—	—
1991	175	173	—	—	—
Age 60+					
1985	163	155	100	0·63	0·41
1986	179	177	112	0·66	0·42
1987	182	180	108	0·61	0·41
1988	139	135	78	0·61	0·39
1989	146	139	56	0·68	—
1990	169	167	41	—	—
1991	151	148	—	—	—

Notes:

Cancer of the cervix (ICD-9 180[1]) in Scotland: numbers of new cases registered, numbers of cases registered from hospital records[2], numbers of deaths up to 31 December 1990 and one and three year survival rates[3] by age and year treatment commenced.

[1] International Classification of Diseases Ninth Revision—Code 180.

[2] Most registrations are made on the basis of medical records or pathology reports. Selecting cases registered from hospital records excludes a small number of cases notified to the registration system only at the time of death. Most of the such cases will be of persons, usually elderly, who were not treated.

[3] The survival rates were calculated using the 'life table' method and represent the proportions of survivors at the first and third anniversary of the date treatment commenced.

Passive Smoking

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what statutory provisions govern the extent to which, or means by which, a person can sue for damages or compensation for illnesses caused by passive smoking in the workplace; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 8 June 1993]:* There are no statutory provisions expressly dealing with illnesses caused by passive smoking in the workplace. However, regulation 6 of the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992, section 4 of the Factories Act 1961 and section 7 of the Offices, Shops and Railway Premises Act 1963 make provision for the ventilation of workplaces. Regulation 25(3) of the 1992 regulations also deals with the provision of suitable arrangements in rest rooms and rest areas to protect non-smokers from discomfort caused by tobacco smoke.

Breaches of duty under these provisions are actionable in so far as they cause damage.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 16 June 1993

TRANSPORT

Red Star Parcel Service

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the sale of the British Rail Board's Red Star Parcels business will commence.

Mr. MacGregor: The board has today invited prospective purchasers of its Red Star parcels business to apply for an information memorandum describing the business and the proposed basis for sale. The closure date for receipt of detailed proposals is 13 August 1993.

Mersey Ferries

Ms Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what requests he has received to end the royal charter which currently covers ferry services across the River Mersey.

Mr. Freeman: None.

Train Accident, York

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the cause of the train accident at York on 23 April which involved hospital treatment of injured persons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail is at present conducting an inquiry into the events which led to this accident. Until conclusions are reached, I am unable to comment on the cause, but I understand that the Health and Safety Executive's railway inspectorate is keeping closely in touch with BR on this matter. The inspectorate will consider the report of the BR inquiry in due course and take any necessary action.

M1 to M62 Link Road

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what account was taken of the desirability of reducing carbon dioxide emissions in the cost benefit analysis for the M1 to M62 link road.

Mr. Key: The reduction of carbon dioxide emissions is not a factor in the Department's cost benefit economic analysis.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has had from hon. Members, lobby groups, businesses and the general public with regard to the M1 to M62 link road.

Mr. Key: The public consultation has so far resulted in:

58 parliamentary questions
137 letters from hon. Members to Ministers
718 letters from the public to Ministers
over 1,500 letters to officials
12 petitions containing over 20,000 signatures

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to seek private sector finance for the M1 to M62 link road.

Mr. Key: Although this scheme is at an early developmental stage, we would be willing to consider any approaches from the private sector about financial involvement.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received since the formal consultation process ended from local authorities with regard to the M1 to M62 link road.

Mr. Key: Representations have so far been received from Kirklees metropolitan district council and the City of Wakefield MDC since the end of the consultation period.

Railway Centre, York

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will establish a permanent working group incorporating *(a)* his Department, *(b)* British Rail, *(c)* York Chamber of Commerce, *(d)* relevant local authorities and *(e)* other relevant interests for the promotion and protection of the Greater York area as a railway centre.

Mr. Freeman: I would be happy to meet hon. Members and representatives of the local authorities and the York Chamber of Commerce to discuss the impact of our proposals for the railways on the York area. I will write to the hon. Member and other hon. Members concerned with proposals for such a meeting.

"Is Your Flight Affected by a Royal Flight"

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the Civil Airports Authority regarding the leaflet it has distributed to airfields entitled "Is Your Flight Affected by a Royal Flight"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: None. The leaflet advertises a free telephone service which provides aviators with up-to-date information on temporarily restricted airspace which they should avoid, for their own safety and the safety of others. Royal flights are not the only reason why a temporary restriction might be imposed, as the leaflet indicates.

Forward Look

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will designate one of his Ministers to be responsible for his Department's contribution to the Government's science and technology Forward Look.

Mr. MacGregor: Paragraph 2.37 of the recent White Paper "Realising Our Potential—A Strategy for Science, Engineering and Technology" describes the preparation of the Forward Look by the Office of Science and Technology, and the participation of Government Departments through the existing, well-established machinery of the official and ministerial Cabinet Committees on Science and Technology.

Near-market Research

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what his Department's policy is with regard to the funding of near-market research.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer the hon. Member to paragraphs 2.20 to 2.22 of the White Paper "Realising Our Potential—A Strategy for Science, Engineering, and Technology".

Coastguard

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many auxiliary coastguard *(a)* patrol hours and *(b)* training hours were worked in each coastguard district in the United Kingdom in each year since 1979; and how many are expected to be worked in the current year.

Mr. Norris: The historic information on the patrol and training hours could be given only at disproportionate cost. The estimate for the current years figures for the coastguard districts are as follows:

District	*Patrol hours*	*Training hours*
Aberdeen	1,644	3,982
Shetland	0	2,500
Pentland	972	4,860
Forth	1,284	3,144
Tyne Tees	1,560	2,860
Humber	2,540	4,672
Yarmouth	2,424	3,840
Thames	6,160	3,500
Dover	4,778	4,040
Solent	8,250	4,422
Portland	7,354	5,163
Brixham	10,362	3,850
Flamouth	8,758	9,120
Swansea	3,990	5,620
Milford Haven	1,272	3,700
Holyhead	2,210	3,060
Liverpool	3,363	3,540
Clyde	2,200	2,667
Oban	5,892	4,320
Stornoway	2,612	7,136
Belfast	2,904	2,208

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much money his Department has provided for auxiliary coastguard pay and allowances *(a)* excluding and *(b)* including training costs in each coastguard region in the United Kingdom in each year since 1979 at 1979 values.

Mr. Norris: The information in the form required is not readily available and could be given only at a disproportionate cost. The total auxiliary coastguard pay and allowances, including training costs, for coastguard regions for financial years in actual prices are as follows:

Region	*1990-91* £	*1991-92* £	*1992-93* £
Aberdeen	201,889	187,103	200,123
Yarmouth	181,201	181,597	219,218
Dover	115,344	149,805	251,839
Falmouth	448,425	439,077	379,940
Swansea	297,384	287,035	337,332
Clyde	191,330	221,988	237,354

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many auxiliary coastguard *(a)* patrol hours and *(b)* training hours were worked in each coastguard region in the United Kingdom in each year since 1979; and how many are available in the current year.

Mr. Norris: The historic information on the patrol and training hours could be given only at disproportional cost. The estimate for the current years figures for the coastguard regions are shown as follows:

Region	*Patrol hours*	*Training hours*
Aberdeen	13,020	14,486
Yarmouth	6,524	11,372
Dover	19,188	11,962
Falmouth	26,474	18,133
Swansea	10,835	15,920
Clyde	13,608	16,331

Railway Vandalism

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 27 May, *Official Report*, column *687*, what information he has on how many of the offences of vandalism on rail lines received sentences of four years' imprisonment and on the nature of the offences in each such case.

Mr. Freeman: The information in the form requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

British Rail (Appointments)

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many of Railtrack's senior appointments come from *(a)* BR, *(b)* his Department, and *(c)* elsewhere; and how pay levels for people in *(a)* and *(b)* have altered.

Mr. Freeman *[pursuant to his reply, 30 March 1993, column 165]:* Mr. Horton's appointment as chairman-designate of Railtrack was announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, on 2 February 1993, during the second reading debate of the current Railways Bill. With effect from 3 February, Mr. Horton's salary was increased from £28,640 to £120,000, in recognition of the extra work and responsibilities he was being asked to take on, in planning and implementing the creation of Railtrack, in addition to his ongoing duties as a member and vice-chairman of the BR board.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

High Court Judges

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list by year for the last five years, and for this year to date, the number of barristers asked but who have declined to become High Court judges.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Set out below are the numbers of practitioners who have consented, and declined, to allow their names to be recommended to Her Majesty the Queen for immediate appointment to the High Court Bench in each of the last five years, and so far this year. All those who declined, with one exception, have made it clear that they hope to be considered again for appointment to the High Court Bench in the future.

	Numbers consented	*Numbers declined*
1988-89	7	—
1989-90	8	—
1990-91	2	—

	Numbers consented	Numbers declined
1991-92	7	1
1992-93	19	6
[1]1993-94	8	2

[1] to date.

Legal Services Ombudsman

Mr. Heald: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when he expects publication of the second annual report of the legal services ombudsman.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The legal services ombudsman has today published his second annual report and copies have been placed in the Library.

ENVIRONMENT

Environment Statistics

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department's 15th "Annual Digest of Environment Statistics" was published; how many copies were printed; at what cost; and to whom the digest is being distributed.

Mr. Yeo: The 15th annual "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics" was published on 27 May 1993. It is on sale through bookshops, priced £14.95. Her Majesty's Stationery Office has printed 1,500 copies, of which my Department has purchased 450. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses and have been sent to other Government Departments, to those who contributed data and information and to other contacts.

Council Tenants

Mr. Congdon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each local authority the number and total value of cash incentive grants made to council tenants in 1992-93.

Mr. Baldry: The table shows the number of value of cash incentive scheme grants made to local authority tenants in 1992-93 under section 129 of the Housing Act 1988.

Local Authority cash incentive schemes—grants and expenditure 1992-93

Local authority	Number of grants	Total expenditure (£000)
Eastern		
Aylesbury Vale[1]	8	154
Basildon[1]	14	226
Braintree[1]	3	22
Broxbourne[1]	10	180
Castle Point[1]	6	91
Colchester[1]	29	491
Dacorum	29	612
East Hertfordshire[1]	24	531
Epping Forest	2	24
Huntingdon	22	177
Luton[1]	20	344
Maldon[1]	5	100
Mid Bedfordshire[1]	11	160
Milton Keynes[1]	10	150
North Hertfordshire[1]	6	68
Peterborough	10	101
Rochford[1]	8	173
St. Albans[1]	19	302
Southend[1]	8	100
South Norfolk	4	44
Stevenage[1]	9	140
Three Rivers[1]	12	86
Watford[1]	14	167
London		
Barnet[1]	32	1,250
Bexley[1]	20	369
Brent[1]	221	4,000
Bromley	17	179
Camden[1]	52	1,017
City of London[1]	5	92
Croydon[1]	136	2,337
Ealing[1]	87	1,148
Enfield[1]	71	1,368
Greenwich[1]	57	583
Hackney[1]	73	933
Hammersmith and Fulham[1]	69	1,101
Haringey[1]	69	1,449
Harrow[1]	47	987
Havering[1]	17	123
Hillingdon[1]	78	1,846
Hounslow[1]	71	1,034
Islington[1]	119	2,759
Kensington and Chelsea[1]	41	850
Kingston upon Thames	17	299
Lambeth[1]	46	920
Lewisham[1]	25	328
Merton[1]	27	475
Newham[1]	51	750
Redbridge[1]	8	149
Richmond[1]	84	1,382
Southwark[1]	15	198
Sutton[1]	26	462
Tower Hamlets[1]	25	412
Waltham Forest[1]	52	796
Wandsworth[1]	125	2,481
Westminster[1]	80	1,598
South East		
Adur[1]	21	302
Arun[1]	11	110
Brighton[1]	21	298
Canterbury[1]	20	263
Cherwell[1]	5	48
Chichester[1]	18	214
Dartford[1]	9	175
Dover[1]	24	447
Eastbourne[1]	11	176
Eastleigh[1]	16	198
East Hampshire[1]	5	80
Elmbridge[1]	3	52
Fareham[1]	4	76
Gillingham[1]	30	359
Gosport[1]	6	96
Gravesham[1]	6	60
Guildford[1]	5	132
Hart[1]	4	92
Hastings[1]	13	112
Havant[1]	10	147
Horsham[1]	6	102
Hove[1]	7	88
Lewes[1]	15	150
Maidstone[1]	5	107
Mole Valley[1]	8	112
New Forest[1]	16	211
Oxford[1]	3	41
Portsmouth[1]	162	1,943
Reading[1]	23	446
Reigate and Banstead[1]	11	220

Local authority	Number of grants	Total expenditure (£000)
Rother[1]	8	130
Runnymede[1]	2	40
Rushmoor[1]	28	420
Shepway[1]	6	111
Slough[1]	57	580
Southampton[1]	68	445
Spelthorne[1]	4	321
Tandridge[1]	5	60
Test Valley[1]	15	215
Thanet[1]	8	133
Waverley[1]	4	76
Wealden[1]	10	200
West Oxfordshire[1]	6	107
Windsor and Maidenhead[1]	14	150
Woking[1]	17	365
Wokingham[1]	8	160
Worthing[1]	5	75
EAST MIDLANDS		
Daventry	7	70
East Northamptonshire	20	120
South Kesteven	6	36
West Midlands		
Malvern Hills	1	10
Solihull	4	23
Stafford	12	94
Wyre Forest	6	50
South West		
Bournemouth	19	165
Cheltenham	25	249
Cotswold	5	34
Exeter	5	49
Kennett	4	40
Kerrier	1	5
Kingswood	1	5
Mendip	10	120
Penwith	5	50
Poole	15	103
Purbeck	2	20
Restormel	1	8
Stroud	10	100
Taunton Deane	21	162
Teignbridge	3	22
Yorkshire and Humberside		
Hambleton	2	18
Total	3,094	50,226

[1] Expenditure fully or partially funded from additional £30 million made available to local authorities in London and South-East England as part of the autumn statement package to stimulate the housing market and help relieve homelessness.

Water Charges

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the possibility of water companies using council tax banding rates for charging purposes.

Mr. Baldry: Many customers have expressed the view that the fairest way of paying for water and sewerage services is in relation to the amount used. There is no evidence as yet that council tax banding provides a reasonable proxy for water usage.

Air Pollution, London

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the level of air pollution in London; what targets he has for reducing it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: Air quality is currently monitored automatically at four sites in London by my Department.

So far this year the air quality measured at these four sites has been "good" or "very good" on at least 96 per cent of days. On occasions particularly during hot sunny weather, photochemical smog may be produced which can lead to poor air quality.

The main source of air pollution in London is vehicle exhaust emissions. Measures to deal with such emissions include the requirement for catalytic converters on new cars from 1 January this year. This will reduce emissions from each car by at least 80 per cent. In addition, the MOT emission check introduced for cars from 1 November 1991 should secure substantial reductions in carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons. A metered smoke test was introduced in the annual test for heavy diesels on 1 September this year.

Council Tax, Harlow

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the substance of representations he received other than from Harlow district council in deciding on the limits to be imposed on the council's rates for council tax for 1993-94.

Mr. Baldry: We received representations from both of the main opposition groups on Harlow council, and from the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes). The Conservative group suggested various options for reducing the authority's expenditure, criticised a number of policy decisions taken by the authority and considered that a budget of about £11·5 million for 1993-94 would be achievable. These representations were supported by the hon. Member for Harlow.

The Liberal Democrat group considered that the final cap should be higher than our proposed cap but lower than the authority's alternative.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which representations made on behalf of Harlow district council in relation to the probable consequences of reductions in net expenditure contemplated by his proposed council tax cap he has rejected.

Mr. Baldry: Before taking his decision on the level of the final cap for Harlow my right hon. Friend took account of all the relevant available information, including all representations, both written and oral, made by and on behalf of the authority in support of its alternative cap.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment from which hon. Members he has received representations about council tax capping for *(a)* Harlow and *(b)* Castle Point for 1993-94.

Mr. Baldry: We have received representations from the hon. Members for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) and for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) on capping for 1993-94 in relation to Harlow and Castle Point respectively.

Radon

Sir Roger Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he has received from the National Radiological Protection Board about the number of deaths and incidence of lung cancer attributable to the presence of radon in houses; what assessment he has made of the results of the programme to tackle the radon problem; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) estimates that 2,000 cases of lung cancer per annum are attributable to the presence of radon in houses. Measurements of radon have been made in 140,000 houses and 35,000 more are being processed. The Government's programme to identify homes with radon levels above the action level is continuing, and is subject to continuous assessment.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are taken to ensure that expenditure and revenue controls imposed on a local authority by his Department are not so substantial or at such short notice as to make the reduction unreasonably difficult to achieve.

Mr. Baldry: In recent years, as local authorities themselves requested, we have announced our provisional capping criteria well in advance of the date by which they must set their budgets.

Before proposing a cap for any authority designated for capping, my right hon. Friend takes into account all available relevant information. It is then open to an authority to challenge its proposed cap and to suggest some higher alternative. The supporting case made by the authority and all other relevant available information about its circumstances is carefully considered before a decision is taken on its final cap. That final cap must in the view of my right hon. Friend be reasonable, achievable and appropriate in all the circumstances of the authority.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the five highest year-on-year reductions in net expenditure required of a local authority to bring its budget into conformity with the controls imposed under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, since the Act came into force.

Mr. Baldry: The Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 contains no provisions relating to the reduction of local authorities' expenditure.

Merseyside Development Corporation

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what major developments are projected within the Merseyside development corporation area for the next five years.

Mr. Baldry: Merseyside development corporation has a substantial programme of encouraging major developments throughout the designated area. MDC's policies are discussed at the ministerial corporate plan meeting and with officials at Merseyside task force throughout the year. MDC's strategy is to secure the self-sustaining regeneration of Merseyside and great emphasis is placed on attracting investment to the area. Twenty-two major developments are projected within MDC's area over the next five years. These include five developments on land not owned by the corporation but which could require MDC support.

The list is as follows:

South Liverpool
Riverside Housing Area
Herculaneum—Commercial Development
Brunswick Business Park—Further refurbishment of industrial/commercial units
East Brunswick Housing Site
South Ferry Island—Commercial/residential development

Liverpool Waterfront
Kings Dock—Leisure development
Princes Dock[1]—Commercial/residential/leisure
Baltic Triangle—Office development
Albert Dock—Commercial/leisure

North Liverpool
Sandhills Business Park—Industrial development
BEOCO Site[1]—Mixed use/office/business park/retail
North Liverpool Industrial Area—Industrial development
Vauxhall Housing Area—Social/low cost housing
Waterloo Dock[1]—Further housing

Birkenhead
12 Quays
Rose Brae Phases I and II—Residential development
Scottsfield—Commercial/industrial development by Hanks Group plc.
Green Lane—Commercial/industrial development
Cammell Lairds[1]—In ownership of VSEL

New Brighton Area
Kings Esplanade Site—Leisure
Victoria Parade Site—60 residential units

Bootle
Port expansion[1]—Port related activities, warehousing etc.

[1] Non-MDC land/property.

Wall Insulation

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he gave to proposing improvements to wall insulation in his Department's consultative document on building regulations (conservation of fuel and power); and what public guidance he gives on cavity wall insulation.

Mr. Baldry: The current proposals for revising part L of the Building Regulations would significantly improve wall insulation taking the fabric of the wall as a whole. In particular the proposals would no longer allow lower standards of wall insulation where double glazing is fitted.

The Department's Building Research Establishment has produced a number of publications over the years on cavity wall insulation and made contributions to publications produced by for example the British Standards Institution, and the National House-Building Council. Two of its publications are:

Report No. 143 "Thermal insulation avoiding risks"; and
NHBC Good Practice Guide: "Thermal insulation and ventilation".

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to make it illegal for recycled CFCs to be used except where proof is demonstrated that none will be used to service leakages.

Mr. Yeo: No.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to establish an annual audit indicating the amount of CFCs and hydrochlorofluorocarbons purchased by United Kingdom companies.

Mr. Yeo: No, this would impose an unnecessary burden on business, given the tight controls on the supply of CFCs and the supply and use controls we will be negotiating for HCFCs.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward legislation to ban the sale of CFC and hydrochlorofluorocarbons technology and equipment.

Mr. Yeo: Production and supply of new CFCs will end in the European Community by 1 January 1995, with an 85 per cent. cut from 1986 levels by 1 January 1994.

HCFCs are necessary in the short to medium term in some applications to phase out CFCs quickly. Within the EC we will be pressing for strict controls to ensure that HCFCs are used only where other more environmentally suitable alternatives are not available.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people will be enforcing the phase out of CFC 113 in the United Kingdom; and what information he has as to how many staff will be involved in each of the other European Community countries.

Mr. Yeo: CFC 113 is no longer produced in the United Kingdom. Enforcement of the controls on its importation is carried out by HM Customs and Excise. No officers are exclusively engaged on this work which is carried out alongside their enforcement of other prohibitions and restrictions. I have no information on staff involved in other member states.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to establish an information hotline to advise on emissions of ozone-depleting substances.

Mr. Yeo: None.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to ensure that all products made with or containing any ozone depleting substances are clearly marked.

Mr. Yeo: The Government strongly support the European Community eco-labelling scheme which looks at all the effects of products on the environment. There are no plans to have a separate scheme for products containing or made with ozone-depleting substances.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce a more rigorous regime of fines and penalties for the emission of ozone depleting substances.

Mr. Yeo: None. The disposal of waste ozone-depleting substances by releasing them to the atmosphere is an offence under section 33(1)(c) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The penalties available to the courts for that offence are, on summary conviction, up to £20,000 fine or six months' imprisonment or, on conviction on indictment, an unlimited fine or up to two years' imprisonment.

Leeds Development Corporation

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, by local authority ward, the numbers of jobs created by the Leeds development corporation in each year since its creation.

Mr. Baldry: Official statistics for employees in employment are made available for local authority wards and aggregations of them by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. The area covered by the Leeds development corporation does not coincide with ward boundaries.

Information on the numbers of jobs created within the area covered by Leeds development corporation is compiled by the development corporation. The numbers of jobs created within its development area in each year since its designation are:

Year	*Number*
1988-89	1,526
1989-90	2,458
1990-91	2,320
1991-92	210
1992-93	830

Science and Technology

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will designate one of his Ministers to be responsible for his Department's contribution to the Government's science and technology "Forward Look."

Mr. Yeo: Paragraph 2.37 of the recent White Paper "Realising Our Potential: A Strategy for Science, Engineering and Technology" describes the preparation of the Forward Look by the Office of Science and Technology, and the participation of Government Departments through the existing, well-established machinery of the official and ministerial Cabinet Committees on Science and Technology.

Natural Environment Research Council

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to draw up a concordat of co-operation between his Department and the Natural Environment Research Council.

Mr. Yeo: As the recent White Paper "Realising Our Potential: A Strategy for Science and Technology" makes clear, a new system of research councils will come into effect on 1 April 1994. The Government have proposed that each of these new research councils should work with the Government Departments with which they have a significant policy connection to draw up and publish concordats.

Near-market Research

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what his Department's policy is with regard to the funding of near-market research.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to paragraphs 2.20 to 2.22 of the White Paper "Realising Our Potential: A Strategy for Science, Engineering and Technology".

Planning Appeals

Ms Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) pursuant to his answer of 8 June, *Official Report*, column *197-98*, concerning planning appeals, if he will name each project listed.

(2) pursuant to his answer of 8 June, *Official Report*, column *197-98*, concerning planning appeals, if he will list the parliamentary constituencies in which the projects were located;

(3) pursuant to his answer of 8 June, *Official Report*, column *197-98*, concerning planning appeals, how many and which of the projects went ahead; and in which parliamentary constituency each was situated.

Mr. Baldry: The following information is given for the 113 planning appeals decided by the Secretary of State between 1 April 1986 and 31 December 1992 following a local inquiry and contrary to the recommendations of the planning inspector. It is not possible to say whether the projects listed went ahead but the nature of the decision made is indicated. Aggregate data on the outcome of earlier planning appeals has been included in successive reports of the chief planning inspector (copies of which are placed in the House Library) but details of those individual projects could be provided now only at disproportionate cost.

Proposed development	*Planning permission given (Y)es/(N)o*	*Parliamentary constituency*
1986-87		
Microwave radio station—Chichester	Y	Chichester
Residential development—Hayle	Y	St. Ives
Residential development—Bramcote	N	Broxtowe
Residential development—Alcester	N	Stratford upon Avon
Residential development—Maidstone	Y	Maidstone
Residential development—Pinner	N	Harrow West
Commercial development—St. Albans	N	St. Albans
Residential development—Bromley	Y	Lewisham West
Change of Use of land to playing fields—Stafford	Y	Stafford
Residential development—Welwyn Garden City	N	Welwyn Hatfield
Sheltered dwellings—Horsham	N	Horsham
Residential development—Backwell, Avon	N	Woodspring
Office development—Bromley	Y	Ravensbourne
Retail warehouse, garden centre—Peterborough	Y	Peterborough
Residential development—Colchester	N	South Colchester and Maldon
Residential development—Calderdale	Y	Calder Valley
Residential development—Calderdale	Y	Calder Valley
Residential caravan site for gypsy families—Berkshire	N	Reading East
Retail development—Benson, Oxon	N	Henley
Residential development—Weybridge	N	Chertsey and Walton
Retail stores—Cobham	Y	Esher
Industrial development—Rayleigh	Y	Castle Point
Showroom and office development—Westminster	Y	Islington North
Hypermarket—Nottingham	Y	Nottingham East
Commercial development—Cambridge	N	Cambridge
Commercial development—Cambridge	N	Cambridge
1987-88		
Residential development—Totton, Hants	N	Romsey and Waterside
Residential development—Monks Park, Avon	N	Bristol, North West
Retirement homes, warden accommodation—Horsmonden, Kent	N	Tunbridge Wells
Restaurent and petrol station—Brentwood	N	Brentwood and Ongar
Restaurant and petrol station—Brentwood	N	Brentwood and Ongar
Residential development—Fareham	N	Fareham
Retail superstore—Luton	N	North Luton
Retail industrial and warehousing—Doncaster	Y	Doncaster, Central
Residential development—Hexham	Y	Hexham
Residential development—Exminster	Y	Tiverton
Offices development—Lambeth	Y	Vauxhall
Offices development—Lambeth	Y	Vauxhall
Mineral extraction—County Durham	Y	North Durham
Supermarket and filling station—Newcastle upon Tyne	N	Newcastle upon Tyne, North
Retail food store—Newcastle upon Tyne	N	Newcastle upon Tyne, North
Retail superstore—Gosforth	N	Newcastle upon Tyne, North
Retail superstore—Milton Keynes	N	Milton Keynes, South West
Residential dwellings—Alvanley, Cheshire	Y	Eddisbury
1988-89		
Development of a business park—Crawley	N	Crawley
Business, retail park and residential development—Crawley	N	Crawley
Residential development—Hanham	N	Wansdyke
Residential development—Edenbridge, Kent	N	Sevenoaks

Proposed development	Planning permission given (Y)es/(N)o	Parliamentary constituency
Residential development, nursing homes and residential care homes—Formby, Lancashire	N	Crosby
Residential development—Alton	N	Winchester
Residential development—Weybridge	Y	Chartey and Walton
Residential development—Weybridge	Y	Chartey and Walton
Residential development—Weybridge	Y	Chartey and Walton
Re-alignment of link road and residential development—Hart, Hampshire	N	Aldershot
Residential development—Kempston, Bedfordshire	N	Mid Bedfordshire
Residential and retail development—Bramley, Hampshire	N	Basingstoke
Residential development—Bramley, Hampshire	N	Basingstoke
Service buildings and offices—Waterloo, SE1.	Y	Vauxhall
Residential development—Cleveleys	Y	Wyre
Residential development—Cleveleys	Y	Wyre
Residential development—Long Ashton, Avon	N	Woodspring
Retail warehouse and garden centre—Coventry	Y	Coventry, North East
Residential development—North Morley, Yorkshire	Y	Morley and Leeds, South
1989-90		
Trunk-Road Service Area—Swanley, Kent	N	Sevenoaks
Industrial development—Guildford	N	Guildford
Industrial development—Guildford	N	Guildford
Industrial development—Guildford	N	Guildford
Residential, leisure and industrial development—Stratford upon Avon	Y	Stratford upon Avon
Residential development—Codnor, Derbyshire	N	Amber Valley
Residential development—Rochester, Kent	Y	Tonbridge and Malling
Minerals extraction—Thatcham, Berkshire	Y	Newbury
Residential development—Dawlish	Y	Tiverton
Leisure development—Stevenage, Hertfordshire	Y	Stevenage
Leisure development—Stevenage, Hertfordshire	Y	Stevenage
Leisure development—Stevenage, Hertfordshire	Y	Stevenage
Leisure development—Stevenage, Hertfordshire	Y	Stevenage
Office development—Islington, EC1	N	Hackney South and Shoreditch
Offices development—Windsor	N	Windsor and Maidenhead
Offices development—Windsor	N	Windsor and Maidenhead
Retail development—Test Valley, Hampshire	N	Romsey and Waterside
Hotel development—Hendlip, Worcestershire	Y	Mid Worcestershire
Residential development—East Sussex	N	Hastings and Rye
Residential development—East Sussex	N	Hastings and Rye
Retail development—Staines	N	Spelthorne
1990-91		
Housing, leisure, warehouse development—Ashford, Kent	N	Ashford
Mobile homes and caravans—Milton, Cambridgeshire	N	South East Cambridgeshire
Petrol station and restaurant—Northamptonshire	N	Northampon South
Retail development—Northamptonshire	N	Northampton South
Retail development—Thame, Oxfordshire	Y	Henley
Residential and industrial developments—Westbere, Kent	N	Canterbury
Retail and residential development—Amberside, Cumbria	N	Westmorland and Lonsdale
Business park—Oxfordshire	N	Henley
Retail development—Bromley	N	Ravensborough
Retail development—Feltham, L.B. Hounslow	N	Feltham and Heston
Leisure development—Near Swindon, Wiltshire	N	Swindon
Residential development—Downton, Wiltshire	N	Salisbury
Hotel development—Ardeley, Oxfordshire	N	Banbury
Hotel development—Ardeley, Oxfordshire	N	Banbury
Hotel development—Ardeley, Oxfordshire	N	Banbury
Residential development—Cookham, Berkshire	N	Windsor and Maidenhead
Residential development—Peacehaven, East Sussex	N	Lewes
1991-92		
Residential and Office development—Datchet, Berkshire	N	East Berkshire
Residential development—Bognor Regis.	N	Chichester
Industrial development—Vale Royal, Cheshire.	Y	Tatton
Industrial development—South Bedfordshire.	N	South West Bedfordshire
Retail development—Greenwich	N	Greenwich
Residential and industrial development—Kent.	N	Canterbury
Hotel development—Wilmslow, Cheshire.	N	Tatton
1992-93		

Proposed development	*Planning permission given (Y)es/(N)o*	*Parliamentary constituency*
Industrial development—Reading.	N	Reading East
Industrial development—Fareham.	N	Fareham
Retention of caravan—South Norfolk.	N	South Norfolk
Industrial development—Cinderford, Gloucester.	Y	West Gloucestershire
Leisure development—Bromley.	N	Ravensbourne

Ms Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 8 June, *Official Report*, column *197-98*, concerning planning appeals, what proportion of the total number of public inquiries the figures represent.

Mr. Baldry: The following is the information:

Year	*A Total number of appeal decisions following an inquiry*	*B Of which decisions by Secretary of State following inquiry*	*C Of which decisions by Secretary of State contrary to the Inspector's recommendation*	*D Proportion of column C to column B per cent.*
1979	2,599	861	17	2·0
1980	2,786	845	15	1·8
1981	2,913	919	34	3·7
1982	2,723	596	20	3·4
1983	2,257	370	13	3·5
1984	1,551	253	16	6·3
1985-86[1]	2,114	362	25	6·5
1986-87[2]	2,098	451	26	5·8
1987-88	1,960	356	18	5·1
1988-89	2,204	267	19	7·1
1989-90	2,347	299	21	7·0
1990-91	1,960	172	17	9·9
1991-92	1,808	99	7	7·1
1992-93[3]	1,505	166	5	3·0

[1]From 1 January 1985 to 31 March 1986
[2]1986-87 and subsequent years are 1 April to 31 March
[3]Data available to 31 December 1992

Benomyl

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what investigations are being carried out into the impact of the use of Benomyl and related products on the environment.

Mr. Yeo: Benomyl and related fungicides are used on a wide variety of crops to prevent certain fungal diseases. They have been used for many years without any detrimental effects on the environment being observed. The pesticide will be reviewed in due course at European Community level under the new Pesticides Directive, 91/414/EEC.

Rough Sleepers

Mr. Fishburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the outcome of the recent consultation exercise on the next phase of the Government's rough sleepers initiative; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Under the first phase of the rough sleepers initiative, from 1990-91 to 1992-93, the Government provided resources of £96 million to assist people sleeping rough in central London.

Independent research, funded by this Department, into the effectiveness of the rough sleepers initiative, shows that it has been a success. Through the initiative, several thousand people with a history of sleeping rough have been provided with accommodation. The number of people sleeping rough in central London has fallen by more than a half, from estimates of over 1,000 before the initiative began, to around 420 at a count in November 1992.

The Government have made available a further £86 million over the next three financial years, 1993-94 to 1995-96, to continue the rough sleepers initiative in central London. On 18 January 1993 I issued a discussion paper, "The Rough Sleepers Initiative: The Next Three Years". It contained a range of proposals, based on recommendations from the independent research, aiming to ensure closer targeting of resources on central London's street homeless.

Almost 100 organisations responded to the paper. There has been a broad measure of support for the main thrust of our proposals. In the light of those responses, I am today issuing a strategy document that outlines the way forward for the rough sleepers initiative over the next three financial years until 1995-96, to assist our aim to make it unnecessary for people to sleep rough in central London.

We will continue to concentrate on funding permanent accommodation in houses and flats, with outreach work and resettlement support from voluntary organisations, to allow people sleeping rough to make a successful transition to a settled life. To ensure the better targeting of resources we are concentrating help on a limited number of specialist agencies with referral rights into RSI permanent accommodation; making referral agencies responsible for upholding the eligibility criteria; focusing some of the resources on zones, commencing with the Strand, with particular encouragement for consortia to come forward with proposals to reduce significantly the numbers sleeping rough in a specific area; and reducing the number of housing associations to develop permanent move-on accommodation under the initiative. Also, we are aiming to move towards a more contractual relationship with agencies, in the form of grants with tight, clearly-defined objectives. This, along with regular counts of the number of people sleeping rough in central London, will assist the better monitoring of the initiative.

The further £86 million made available for this initiative, and the proposals in the strategy document to target resources more closely on those in need, will ensure that people sleeping rough in central London will continue to be helped to start a new life away from the streets. I am keen that this initiative should make a further significant impact on the problem of people sleeping rough in the capital.

I have arranged for copies of the strategy document to be placed in the Libraries of this House and the other place.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Bail Hostels

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many and what percentage of *(a)* residents of bail hostels and *(b)* people remanded in the community for a similar range of offences have been convicted subsequently of an offence committed while they were on remand, in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Maclean: Information is not available in the form requested. RPU report 65 "Offending while on bail; a survey of recent studies" is available in the Library. However, this report does not give detail on bail hostels alone; no such study has been published.

Juvenile Offenders

Sir Anthony Durant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding current measures to deal with persistent juvenile offenders.

Mr. Maclean: Representations have been received from a wide range of agencies and individuals. Since 2 March 1993, when my right hon. and learned Friend, the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke), made his statement at columns 139-42 in which, inter alia, he outlined the Government's proposals for a new secure training order, most representations have agreed with the Government's conclusion that the existing arrangements are unsatisfactory and have given general support to the new measures which we have proposed.

Firearms Control Board

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he now expects to make a statement as to the date that the Firearms Control Board will be set up.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No decision has yet been taken on whether to establish a new civilian firearms control board. My right hon. and learned Friend will make an announcement as soon as possible.

Drugs-related Offences

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many drugs-related offences were reported in the Metropolitan police area in January-December 1992; and how many resulted in prosecutions and convictions respectively.

Mr. Maclean: Information for 1992 is not yet available. Information on drug seizures and offenders dealt with in 1992 will be published later this year in the Home Office Statistical Bulletin "Statistics of drugs seizures and offenders dealt with, United Kingdom, 1992" (area tables), a copy of which will be placed in the Library.

New Age Travellers

Mr. Aspinwall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to introduce measures to deal with serious types of illegal trespassing and threats to the public by new age travellers.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The proposals which were announced on 31 March to strengthen section 39 of the Public Order Act 1986 and to give the police new powers to deal with illegal rave parties will be introduced as soon as a legislative opportunity arises.

Mr. Aspinwall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constables of the forces involved on the cost of the police operation code-named Haystack over the recent bank holiday weekend to control convoys of new age travellers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Operation Haystack was the police operation mounted by Gloucestershire constabulary to deal with the activities of new age travellers in its area over the May bank holiday. I understand from the chief constable that the cost of the operation, including the deployment of officers who would have been on duty anyway, was approximately £200,000.

Police, Wales

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many policemen there are in each Welsh police authority indicating *(a)* the number from ethnic backgrounds, *(b)* who are Welsh speakers and *(c)* in total; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information on numbers of officers who speak Welsh is not held centrally. The other information requested is set out in the table.

As at 28 February 1993

	Total police officers	*Officers from ethnic minorities*
Dyfed-Powys	961	Nil
Gwent	1,004	9
North Wales	1,366	1
South Wales	3,175	22
TOTAL	6,506	32

Paul Malone

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what costs were incurred by the West Yorkshire police in carrying out the first investigation into allegations of a possible miscarriage of justice concerning the case of Paul Malone.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This is a matter for the chief constable of the West Yorkshire police.

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what costs have been incurred to date by the Metropolitan police in carrying out the current investigation into allegations of a possible miscarriage of justice concerning the case of Paul Malone.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This is a matter for the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.

Police Retirements

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state the reasons for the retirement of *(a)* Chief Superintendent McQuoid of the West Yorkshire police and *(b)* detective chief inspector Howard Jones of the Metropolitan police force.

Mr. Charles Wardle: These are matters for the individual officers. Under the terms of the Police Pension Regulations 1987 a police officer may retire with full pension rights payable immediately after 30 years pensionable service. Both officers had completed 30 years service with the police at the time of their retirements in March 1990 and May 1993 respectively.

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement detailing the policies relating to retirement of senior police officers during lengthy internal police investigations; and what consideration is given to potential retirements when appointing particular officers to inquiries.

Mr. Charles Wardle: These are matters for police authorities and chief officers in individual cases.

Crime Statistics

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many offences in the Metropolitan police area were committed by *(a)* juveniles up to the age of 16 years and *(b)* young people aged 17-20 years in January to December 1992; what proportion of total offences were (i) car-related, (ii) drugs-related, (iii) robbery, (iv) violent crimes and (v) other; and how many resulted in prosecutions and convictions respectively.

Mr. Maclean: Information is not collected centrally on the number of offences committed by offenders.

Table A shows the number and percentage of "known offenders" (those cautioned and found guilty) by age group in the Metropolitan police district (including City of London) for the offences listed in 1991. Table B shows the number of defendants prosecuted and convicted in the Metropolitan police district (including City of London) for the same offences by age group in 1991.

Data for 1992 will not be available until the autumn.

Table A

Number and percentage of 'known offenders' (those cautioned and found guilty) in the Metropolitan police district (including the City of London) by age group and offence 1991

Offence group	*Aged 10 to under 17*		*Aged 17 to under 21*	
	Number	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
Indictable offences				
Vehicle crime[1]				
indictable	511	5	679	4
Summary	*1,117*	[3]—	*1,225*	[3]—
TOTAL	*1,628*	[3]—	*1,904*	[3]—
Drug offences	894	8	4,397	25
Robbery	353	3	400	2
Violent crimes[2]	1,327	12	1,652	9
Other indictable	7,550	71	10,328	59
Total indictable offences	10,635	100	17,456	100

[1] Includes the indictable offence of stealing a motor vehicle (Theft Act 1968 Section 1); and the summary offences of stealing and unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle (Theft Act 1968 Section 12(1) as amended by Criminal Justice Act 1988 Section 37).
[2] Includes indictable offence groups 'Violence against the person' and 'Sexual offences'.
[3]— Not applicable.

Table B

Number of defendants prosecuted at magistrates courts and convicted at all courts in the Metropolitan police district (including the City of London) by age group and offence 1991.

Offence group	*Aged 10 to under 17*		*Aged 17 to under 21*	
	Prosecutions	*Convictions*	*Prosecutions*	*Convictions*
Indictable offences				
Vehicle crime[1]				
indictable	185	132	705	484
Summary	*459*	*324*	*1,336*	*1,070*
TOTAL	*644*	*456*	*2,041*	*1,554*
Drug offences	130	86	1,631	1,405
Robbery	471	236	636	400
Violent crimes[2]	718	395	1,974	1,144
Other indictable	2,546	1,694	10,213	7,706
Total indicable offences	4,050	2,543	15,159	11,139

[1] Includes the indictable offence of stealing a motor vehicle (Theft Act 1968 Section 1); and the summary offences of stealing and unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle (Theft Act 1968 Section 12(1) as amended by Criminal Justice Act 1988 Section 37).
[2] Includes indictable offence groups 'Violence against the person' and 'Sexual offences'.

Domestic Violence

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many incidents of domestic violence were reported in the Metropolitan police area in January to December 1992; and how many resulted in *(a)* prosecutions and *(b)* convictions, respectively.

Mr. Maclean: Provisional figures provided by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis show that there were approximately 9,800 incidents of domestic violence reported in the Metropolitan police district in 1992. Information on prosecutions and convictions is not available.

Police (Racial Discrimination)

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received on the subject of racial discrimination within the police authorities over the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None.

Notifiable Offences

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many notifiable offences in total were recorded in the Metropolitan police area in 1963, 1970, 1979, 1990, 1991 and 1992; what proportion the offences were per thousand population respectively; and what has been the percentage change in notifiable offences since 1963 and 1979 respectively.

Mr. Maclean: Information on the number of offences recorded in the Metropolitan police district and the number per thousand population is contained in the following table. The percentage increase between 1963 and 1992 was 412 per cent. and between 1979 and 1992 it was 169 per cent.

Number of offences and number per 1,000 population
Metropolitan Police District

Year	*Number of offences*	*Number per 1,000 population*
1963	229,107	29
1970	321,156	42
1979	557,378	76
1990	834,324	115
1991	926,203	128
1992	942,878	130

Car-related Offences

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many car-related offences were reported in the Metropolitan police area in January to December 1992; and how many resulted in prosecutions and convictions respectively.

Mr. Maclean: The available information on notifiable offences relates to vehicle crime which includes offences of theft of and from a vehicle and aggravated vehicle taking. In the Metropolitan police district in 1992, there were 241,437 recorded offences.

Information on the number of defendants prosecuted and convicted in 1991 is given in the following table. Data for 1992 will not be available until the autumn.

Number of defendants prosecuted at magistrates' courts and found guilty at all courts for vehicle crime offences in the Metropolitan police district[1] 1991

Offence	*Prosecutions*	*Convictions*
Theft of a motor vehicle[2]	3,177	2,324
Theft from a motor vehicle	1,126	794
Aggravated vehicle taking[3]	[4]—	[4]—
Vehicle crime	4,303	3,118

[1] Including City of London.
[2] Including stealing a motor vehicle (Theft Act 1968 Section 1); and stealing and unauthorised taking of a vehicle (Theft Act 1968 Section 12(1) as amended by Criminal Justice Act 1988 Section 37).
[3] The Aggravated Vehicle Taking Act 1991 came into force on 1 April 1992.
[4] Not applicable.

Security Firms

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the names of all the private security firms currently employed by his Department, the number of employees for each firm on the contract, the total value of each contract and the total value of all contracts for each financial year since 1987.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The following private security firms are currently employed by the Home Office:

Airline Security Consultants Limited
Burns International Security Services Limited
Group 4 Court Escort Services Limited
Group 4 Remand Services Limited
Group 4 Total Security Limited
Grundig International Limited
Harlow Security Systems Limited
Lisburn Security Services
Maritime Aviation Security Services
Reliance Security Service Limited
SDA (1979) Limited
Securicor Security Services Limited
Securiguard Services Limited
Security Wales Limited
UK Detention Services Limited

The value of each contract is a matter of commercial and contractual confidentiality. Information about the total value of such contracts for each financial year since 1987 is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Information about the number of staff employed on each contract is also not readily available; in some cases the number varies from day to day according to operational requirements.

Strip Searching

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the amount of drugs and explosives detected for each of the past five years as a result of *(a)* strip searching of convicted and remand prisoners and *(b)* strip searching of other people.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested in part *(a)* of the question was collected centrally only from mid November 1990. Information prior to that date could be gathered only by a manual search at disproportionate cost. Additionally it is not possible to give the quantity of drugs found, only the number of occasions when drugs were found on a prisoner's person.

The total numbers of such incidents are as follows:

	Drug finds (incidents)
1990[1]	59
1991	269
1992	289
1993[2]	184

[1] From mid November 1990.
[2] To end May 1993.

There are no recorded incidents of explosives being found as a result of the strip searching of convicted and remand prisoners.

I regret that the information requested in part *(b)* of the question is not collected centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Fire Service, Wales

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will visit *(a)* Queensferry fire station, Deeside and *(b)* Buchley fire station, Clwyd;

(2) if he will make a statement on the future of the fire service in *(a)* Clwyd and *(b)* Wales;

(3) if he will visit Clwyd county council headquarters, Mold to discuss the future of the fire service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present to visit Clwyd. Our proposals for the future structure of the fire service in Wales are set out in the White Paper on the future of local government in Wales (Cm. 2155), which was published on 1 March 1993, and on which we are still receiving comments.

Criminal Injuries (Compensation)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 8 June, *Official Report*, column *182*, how many awards of between £550 and £799 were made by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board in each year since 1986-87.

Mr. Maclean: The published reports of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board do not give data about numbers of awards in the band requested. The following table accordingly summarises data about the nearest equivalent bands.

	Awards			
	£500-599	£600-799	Below £750	£750-999
1986-87	2,362	3,479	—	—
1987-88	2,271	3,428	—	—
1988-89	3,499	5,275	—	—
1989-90	3,179	5,085	—	—
1990-91	3,096	5,886	—	—
1991-92	n/a	n/a	3,893	8,685

Voting Rights

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans he has to publicise the extension of voting rights in European and local elections of EC nationals resident in this country once the Maastricht treaty has been ratified prior to the deadline for inclusion on electoral registers for voting in the European elections of 20 April 1994; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what was the outcome of his most recent meeting with electoral registration officers to discuss the arrangements for the extension of voting rights to EC nationals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My officials have had an informal discussion with some electoral registration officers on the practicalities of implementing the new voting rights provided by the Maastricht treaty. We shall bring forward legislative proposals to give effect to the new voting rights once the Maastricht treaty has been ratified in all the member states. We shall take steps to publicise the new voting rights at that time.

Electoral Registers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will issue updated guidance notes to electoral registration offices on the use of alternative sources of information for the purposes of cross-referencing the draft electoral register subsequent to the abolition of the community charge register; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Electoral registration officers use a number of different sources of information to assist them in their task of drawing up registers of electors. We regularly issue guidance for electoral registration officers but have no plans to issue advice following the replacement of the community charge.

Prisoners (Costs)

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the cost per week, month or year of keeping a prisoner in the various categories of prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the prison service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Sir Nicholas Fairbairn, dated 16 June 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General, Mr. Lewis, from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the cost of keeping a prisoner in the various categories of prison.

The average weekly cost of keeping prisoners in the financial year 1991-92—the latest year for which information has been published—was as follows:

	Weekly cost
Type of establishment	£ per prisoner per week
Local prisons and adult remand centres	437
Dispersal prisons	807
Category B training prisons	438
Category C training prisons	363
Open adult prisons	316
Closed youth establishments	452
Open youth establishments	551
Female establishments	629
All operational establishments	442

Ticket Touts

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement with respect to his policy on the introduction of legislation to outlaw ticket touting at sporting and entertainment events.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 14 June 1993]:* The Government are committed to implementing the Taylor report's recommendation that there should be a new criminal offence of ticket touting at football matches. This is because of the implications such touting may have for public order and public safety. We intend to introduce the appropriate legislation when there is a suitable opportunity in the parliamentary timetable.

More generally we believe that, although some may find touting objectionable, it would not be appropriate for the criminal law to prohibit people from re-selling tickets which they have lawfully obtained, any more than it would be appropriate to forbid people to sell their other possessions. Such an offence would in any event be unenforceable. Neither would it be appropriate for the Government to attempt to regulate the price at which tickets may be resold. It is, however, already an offence for touts to deceive their customers as to the type of tickets they are selling, or obtain tickets by theft, fraud or intimidation. It is also open to the organisers of sporting or other entertainment events to impose contractual conditions on the sale of their tickets, forbidding resale and invalidating the tickets if they are sold on to third parties.

NORTHERN IRELAND

School Meals

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the level of public expenditure on the school meal service in each year since 1979 in cash and real terms.

Mr. Ancram: Net expenditure on school meals and milk (figures for which are not recorded separately) is as follows:

Financial year	*Cash £000*	*AT 1992-93 prices £000*
1978-79	17,031	47,538
1979-80	19,670	47,056
1980-81	18,088	36,568
1981-82	17,381	32,044
1982-83	19,152	32,961
1983-84	21,572	35,484
1984-85	22,417	35,094
1985-86	24,739	36,724
1986-87	25,580	36,789
1987-88	23,950	32,650
1988-89	22,318	28,361
1989-90	23,865	28,456
1990-91	24,152	26,663
1991-92	26,564	27,494
1992-93	[1]27,110	27,110

[1] Actual expenditure not available: figure relates to approved expenditure.

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the average price of a school meal in *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools in cash and real terms in each year since 1979.

Mr. Ancram: The information is available only for fixed price meals and is as follows:

Year	*Primary*		*Secondary*	
	Cash (Pence)	*Real Terms (Pence)*	*Cash (Pence)*	*Real Terms (Pence)*
1979	25	60	25	60
1980	35	71	35	71
1981	45	83	45	83
1982	50	86	50	86
1983	55	90	55	90
1984	55	86	55	86
1985	60	89	60	89
1986	60	86	60	86
1987	70	95	75	102
1988	75	95	80	102
1989	80	95	85	101
1990	85	94	90	99
1991	90	93	95	98
1992	90	90	100	100

Strip Searching

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the amount of drugs and explosives that have been detected for each of the past five years as a result of *(a)* strip searching of convicted and remand persons and *(b)* strip searching of other people.

Mr. Mates: Only prisoners are full-searched within the Northern Ireland prison service. Records of finds of drugs and explosives in prisons in Northern Ireland have not been maintained for the whole of the past five years or in such detail as to quantify amounts of various items detected. The following list details only those finds of drugs clearly identified as resulting from full searches. No explosives have been detected. Other illicit items found in full searches are not included.

Date	*Prison*	*Sentenced or Remand*	*Drugs found*
18 April 1990	Belfast	Remand	Cannabis
22 November 1990	YOC	Sentenced	Cannabis Resin
22 November 1990	YOC	Sentenced	Cannabis Resin
22 November 1990	YOC	Sentenced	Cannabis Resin
13 December 1990	Belfast	Remand	Cannabis Resin
15 March 1991	Belfast	Sentenced	Cannabis Resin
3 August 1991	YOC	Sentenced	Cannabis
6 August 1991	Magilligan	Sentenced	Cannabis
27 September 1991	Belfast	Sentenced	Cannabis Resin
30 September 1991	Belfast	Remand	Cannabis
3 January 1992	YOC	Sentenced	Cannabis

Date	*Prison*	*Sentenced or Remand*	*Drugs found*
3 January 1992	YOC	Sentenced	Cannabis
21 February 1992	YOC	Sentenced	Amphetamine Sulphates
21 February 1992	YOC	Sentenced	Amphetamine Sulphates
4 July 1992	Maze	Sentenced	Alcohol
2 August 1992	Belfast	Sentenced	Cannabis
6 August 1992	Belfast	Sentenced	Cannabis Resin
20 August 1992	Magilligan	Sentenced	10 Tablets
28 August 1992	Belfast	Remand	Cannabis Resin
27 September 1992	YOC	Remand	Methylamphetamine Cannabis 42 Tablets
30 October 1992	Maghaberry	Sentenced	45 Capsules
19 December 1992	YOC	Remand	Cannabis
23 December 1992	Belfast	Remand	Cannabis
23 December 1992	Belfast	Remand	Cannabis
5 January 1993	Magilligan	Sentenced	Cannabis
9 February 1993	Belfast	Sentenced	Cannabis Resin
26 March 1993	Belfast	Sentenced	Cannabis

GP Practices

Mr. Duncan Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many single-handed general practitioner practices there are in Northern Ireland; and what is their average patient holding.

Mr. Ancram: At 1 May there were 85 single-handed general medical practices in Northern Ireland, with an average patient list size of 2,014.

Health Authorities and Trusts

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* health authorities and *(b)* trusts were in existence in Northern Ireland on 1 April; and what is his forecast of the number on 1 April 1994.

Mr. Ancram: On 1 April there were in existence in Northern Ireland four health and social services boards and six HSS trusts and I do not expect there to be any change in the number of authorities purchasing services on behalf of their resident populations by 1 April 1994. However an additional four units have already been approved for trust status and it is intended that they, together with any units which make successful applications in the current third round, will be established to come into operation on 1 April 1994 when necessary changes to the law have been made.

Innovation Support

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking to improve the ease of access to innovation support programmes by small and medium-sized enterprises.

Mr. Atkins: In 1992 the Government published a regional research and development strategy for Northern Ireland "Innovation 2000". That strategy specifically recognised the need to promote research and development, collaboration and innovation in small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs). Government also established the industrial research and technology unit (IRTU) which provides single door access to an extensive range of support facilities for industry. These facilities include access to the SMART and teaching company schemes, product development programmes and EC support mechanisms for SMEs. IRTU also provides technical and scientific support services and delivers a programme of promotional initiatives designed to increase competitiveness and innovation. The recently published IRTU corporate plan emphasises the particular importance of technology transfer, awareness programmes and collaboration at local, national and international level.

Near-market Research

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what his Department's policy is with regard to the funding of near-market research.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to paragraphs 2.20 to 2.22 of the White Paper "Realising Our Potential—A Survey for Science, Engineering and Technology".

Research and Development

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking to improve the take up of grants and other incentives for research and development by small and medium enterprises.

Mr. Atkins: Given their importance in the region's economy, Northern Ireland's research and development strategy and the corporate plan and activities of its industrial research and technology unit are focused on increasing innovation and competitiveness in small to medium enterprises. A range of consultancy and technology transfer services are available; there is a programme of support for research and development, including the SMART awards and product development; and sustained promotional and awareness raising initiatives are undertaken. The SMART awards and teaching company scheme have been particularly successful in the region.

Science and Technology

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will designate one of his Ministers to be responsible for his Department's contribution to the Government's science and technology "Forward Look."

Mr. Atkins: Paragraph 2.37 of the recent White Paper "Realising Our Potential—A Strategy for Science, Engineering and Technology" describes the preparation of

the Forward Look by the Office of Science and Technology and the participation of Government Departments through the existing, well-established machinery of the official and ministerial Cabinet Committees on Science and Technology.

PRIME MINISTER

THORP

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations he has had on the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield.

The Prime Minister: I have received a number of representations.

LINK Scheme

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Prime Minister what proportion of the LINK scheme budget is being transferred from the Department of Trade and Industry to the Office of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

The Prime Minister: LINK is an interdepartmental mechanism for promoting collaborative, precompetitive research involving industry and the science base. As such there is no distinct LINK scheme budget. The Department of Trade and Industry, like other participating Departments, uses money from its overall research and development budget to support LINK programmes and projects where these provide a way of meeting its departmental objectives. The Department's financial commitment to LINK will continue to be substantial and is unaffected by the transfer of responsibility for the LINK steering group and its secretariat to the Office of Science and Technology.

Teaching Company Scheme

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Prime Minister if lead responsibility for the teaching company scheme is being transferred from the Department of Trade and Industry to the Office of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

The Prime Minister: At present, no single Department of state or research council has lead responsibility for the teaching company scheme and no decision has been taken to change this arrangement.

EMPLOYMENT

Market Testing

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what evaluation he has made of the effect on the number of jobs on Merseyside of the introduction of market testing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None.

The information requested on the effect of the Government's market testing programme on the number of jobs on Merseyside can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

As far as the Employment Department group is concerned, the current market testing programme affects a total of about 118 staff in Merseyside county, 108 based at the Health and Safety Executive's site in Bootle, and about 10 Employment Service staff involved in the delivery of job clubs on Merseyside. There will be opportunities for both private sector companies and in-house teams to bid for the departmental work concerned. This will encourage enterprise and the economy generally and Merseyside will benefit from this as much as anywhere else.

EC Social Fund

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women were on European social fund training courses in each of the regions of the United Kingdom at the latest available date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Comprehensive details of the breakdown of European social fund applicants are not readily available at regional level and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Social Affairs Council

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment pursuant to his answer of 7 June, *Official Report*, columns *95-96*, what were the voting figures for each member state recorded in the meeting of the European Community Social Affairs Council held on 1 June.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No formal votes were taken at this Council meeting.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list for each constituency *(a)* the latest unemployment figures, *(b)* the latest figures for those who have been out of work for at least one year and *(c)* the latest figures for those who have been out of work for at least five years; and if he will give the percentage rates for each category by travel-to-work area.

Miss Widdecombe: Information showing unadjusted claimant unemployment by duration and as a percentage of the total work force can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Industrial Injury

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of working hours lost as a result of industrial injury in 1992.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The figures for 1992 are not available. An estimate of absence from work due to workplace injury is available for the year 1989-90 from the special supplement of questions on accidents to the 1990 Labour Force Survey. An estimated 23·2 million days absence occurred in Great Britain in 1989-90. This figure is equivalent to about 170 million hours lost for a five day working week of 37 hours.

SCOTLAND

Health Authorities and Trusts

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* health authorities and *(b)* trusts were in existence in Scotland on 1 April; and what is his forecast for 1 April 1994.

Mr. Stewart: On 1 April 1993 there were 15 health boards, and 17 NHS trusts in Scotland. There are no plans to change the number of health boards but a further 23 hospitals units have applied to become NHS trusts on 1 April 1994. These applications have been released for public consultation.

GP Practices

Mr. Duncan Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many single-handed general practitioner practices there are in Scotland; and what is their average patient holding.

Mr. Stewart: There were 228 unrestricted principals in single handed practices in Scotland at 1 October 1992, the latest date for which information is available centrally. Their average list size was 1,440.

Islands (Subsidies)

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library the Halcrow Fox report on Government subsidies to the Scottish islands.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Once the final report on the findings and conclusions of the ferry subsidies impact study has been completed and submitted to the Scottish Office by Halcrow Fox, St. Andrews Economic Consultants and PA Cambridge Economic Consultants, my right hon. Friend will arrange to have a copy placed in the Library of the House.

Housing, Edinburgh

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish available details of Scottish Homes' major Edinburgh initiative to stimulate existing and new housing suppliers to produce new homes for the private rental market.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Scottish Homes has recently approved 143 houses for market rent in Edinburgh. Its total investment to the end of 1992-93 was around £1·3 million.

Housing Associations

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many housing association tenants in Scotland have now vacated housing association tenancies under the tenant's incentive scheme.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Since April 1990 a total of 267 tenants have received a grant under the tenants incentive scheme.

Shared Equity Housing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress Scottish Homes has made with the development of its share equity pilot; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Scottish Homes is examining a number of new ways of promoting low cost home ownership, including the possibility of shared equity arrangements. It hopes to run a pilot later this year.

Public Transport

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking on the Scottish Consumer Council's recommendations following the recent survey of the facilities for babies and children travelling on public transport.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is for the relevant transport operators to consider the Scottish Consumer Council's recommendations. The Government are, however, committed to the development of a fully accessible transport system and are concerned that account should be taken of the particular need for adequate and safe facilities for babies and children.

Housing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what sums have been *(a)* spent in 1992-93 and *(b)* committed in 1993-94 by Scottish Homes to (i) the provision of furnished accommodation, (ii) the development and piloting of lead tenancies and (iii) the promotion of the tenant's incentive scheme.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: The information is set out in the table:

£ million

	1992-93	*1993-94*[1]
Furnished accommodation[2]	0·110	0·850
Lead tenancies[3]	—	0·043
Grants paid under the tenants incentive scheme	1·336	1·500

[1] Estimated expenditure.
[2] 1992-93 expenditure covers Scottish Homes' own stock only: estimated expenditure for 1993-94 covers own stock and grants to housing associations.
[3] Covers only development costs, not funding of actual units.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of housing associations and housing co-operatives funded by Scottish Homes have agreements whereby local authorities have 50 per cent. nomination rights.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Performance standards for housing associations, issued jointly by Scottish Homes and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, requires associations and co-operatives to seek nomination arrangements with district councils in whose area they operate but details of individual arrangements are not held centrally.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether *(a)* research on housing matters and *(b)* professional postgraduate courses related to housing are funded from the housing or the education budget.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 14 June 1993]:* The Scottish Office environment department funds research on housing matters; and student support for postgraduate diplomas in housing is shared between the Scottish Office environment department and the Scottish Office education department.

Criminal Justice System

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to improve the operation of the Scottish criminal justice system.

Mr. Lang: The first report of the groups which have been reviewing court programming under the chairmanship of Sheriff Principal Gordon Nicholson, QC and Sheriff Graham Cox was published on 11 June. Copies of the report, which contains proposals for improving court programming mainly within the existing legislative framework, have been placed in the House Libraries. Copies have also been sent to the various interests and comments requested by the end of September.

The Government have also been considering measures which would involve statutory change and is publishing today a report entitled "Review of Criminal Evidence and Criminal Procedure", together with a consultation paper seeking the public's views on the proposals in the report. Copies of both have also been placed in the House Libraries.

The proposals in the report aim to secure a substantial reduction in the time wasted by both civilian and police witnesses in attending court for trials which do not take place and in giving evidence which is not contested. They include pre-trial hearings to ensure cases are ready to go to trial; more active management of the pre-trial period; a new form of disclosure of the prosecution case; and the possibility of reduced sentences for those who plead guilty early. The results would include a better deal for thousands of civilian witnesses and more police time released for other duties. The consultation period will last until 30 September and I look forward to receiving views on the proposals from a wide range of interests.

The publication of this report marks the first stage of the process. Later in the year the Government intend to embark on a second round of consultations. This will look at the function and verdicts of the jury in criminal trials, the way in which appeals against conviction and sentence in the criminal courts are dealt with and any matters arising from the report of the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice which have implications for the Scottish criminal justice system. Any proposals for legislative change will be formulated in the light of responses to these two wide-ranging consultation exercises.

Shetland Oil Spill

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made by the ecological steering group he announced on 26 January in relation to the Shetland oil spill.

Sir Hector Monro: The steering group expects to make an interim report on 17 June. I shall arrange for copies to be placed in the Libraries of the House.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has for de minimis thresholds for white collar compulsory competitive tendering.

Mr. Stewart: Current compulsory competitive tendering activities under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 and the Local Government Act 1988 are subject to de minimis thresholds. Where the amount of work falls below these thresholds, authorities are not obliged to seek competitive tenders, though they can do so voluntarily if they wish.

The Government accept the principle that de minimis arrangements should apply to CCT activities for professional and corporate services. We also accept that a local authority needs to perform adequately the core client roles which may not be suitable for competitive tendering and that de minimis arrangements should address these issues.

It is our view that different de minimis thresholds may be appropriate for different services and that different bases for calculating these thresholds may be appropriate. For instance for some services a threshold based on the total value of the service may be appropriate, for others one based on the number of staff employed or a combination of the two may better meet authorities needs. The details of the arrangements to be applied will form part of the current discussions with local authority interests on the implementation of CCT extension. Further announcements will be made in due course.

As with the existing services, local authorities will of course be free to tender services below threshold levels voluntarily.

Prisoners

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the cost per week, month or year of keeping a prisoner in the various categories of prison.

Mr. Lang: The approximate cost per year of keeping a prisoner in the various main categories of prison in Scotland for 1992-93, calculated as total current expenditure, divided by average prisoner numbers, was as follows. For the remand category, the figure was £22,500, for the secure young offenders institution category, £23,000 and for adult secure prisoners the figure was £24,550. This compared to a figure of £31,000 for open and semi open adult prisons and £31,500 for the open and semi open young offenders institution category.

Shipping Services

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pusuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) of 26 May, *Official Report*, column 589, on shipping services to Scottish islands, what consideration will be given in his review to the need for public sector support for private sector investment.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 14 June 1993]:* The Government remain committed to continuing to support essential shipping services to the Scottish islands whether these services are provided by public or private sector operators. The shipping subsidies review will consider a range of different financing and ownership options.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) of 26 May, *Official Report*, column 589, on shipping services to Scottish islands, whether his review will include bulk shipping services.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 14 June 1993]:* Yes.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) of 26 May, *Official Report*, column 589, on shipping services to Orkney and Shetland, what plans he has to extend the principle of giving additional

assistance to P & O Scottish Ferries Ltd. to enable net tariffs of users of the service to remain unchanged to services to islands provided by other operators.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 14 June 1993]:* My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Scotland, announced that he intended to make available a further £1·934 million in the current year to increase the amount of subsidy available for services provided by P&O to Orkney and Shetland. The additional assistance is to be provided to P&O Scottish Ferries Ltd. to enable it to maintain the present level of roll-on/roll-off services in respect of passengers and cars. I have no plans to increase further the level of support for shipping services in the current year.

Conservation Sites

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, by habitat category, sites which in the opinion of Scottish Natural Heritage qualify for designation as special protection areas under the EC directive on the conservation of wild birds (79/409/EEC); which of these are awaiting designation; and if he will indicate a timetable for their designation.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 8 June 1993]:* The information is set out in the table. The sites have not been selected by reference to any habitat category but to their ornithological importance. The Government are working closely with Scottish Natural Heritage with a view to accelerating the rate of designation of special protection areas and to completing the designation programme as soon as possible.

List of sites which in the opinion of Scottish Natural Heritage qualify for special protection area status

Site	*Local Authority*
North Rona and Sula Sgeir	Western Isles
Flannan Isles	Western Isles[1]
St. Kilda	Western Isles[1]
Shiant Isles	Western Isles[1]
West Sound of Harris	Western Isles
Monach Islands	Western Isles
Loch Druidibeg/Loch a' Machair	Western Isles[1]
South Uist Machair and Lochs	Western Isles
West Sound of Barra	Western Isles
Mingulay and Berneray	Western Isles
Pentland Firth Islands	Highland
	Orkney
The Peatlands	Highland
Caithness Lochs	Highland
Caithness Cliffs	Highland
Cape Wrath	Highland
Handa	Highland[1]
Priest Island	Highland[1]
Rum	Highland[1]
Balranald	Western Isles
Baleshare and Kirkibost	Western Isles
Loch Scadavay	Western Isles
Inverpolly, Loch Urigill and Nearby Lochs	Highland
Loch Maree	Highland
Loch Ruthven and Nearby Lochs	Highland
Central Highland Hills and Glens	Highland
Lewis Peatlands	Western Isles
North Harris Mountains	Western Isles
Assynt Lochs	Highland
Loch Stack, Loch Nam Brac and Nearby Lochs	Highland
Loch Shin and Nearby Lochs	Highland
Loch Eye	Highland[1]
Moray Basin Firths and Bays	Grampian
	Highland
Beinn Dearg	Highland
Ben Wyvis	Highland
Glangarry Lochs	Highland
Loch Tarff and Nearby Lochs	Highland
North Inverness Lochs	Highland
Hermaness and Saxa Vord, Unst	Shetland
Ramna Stacks and Gruney	Shetland
Fetlar	Shetland
North Roe and Tingon, Mainland Shetland	Shetland
Papa Stour	Shetland
Foula	Shetland
Noss	Shetland
Fair Isle	Shetland
West Westray	Orkney
Papa Westray (North Hill and Holm)	Orkney
Marwick Head	Orkney
Lochs of Harray and Stenness	Orkney
Hoy	Orkney
Copinsay	Orkney
Sule Skerry and Stack	Orkney
Loch Spynie	Grampian[1]
Loch of Strathbeg	Grampian
Ythan Estuary, Sands of Forvie and Meikle Lochs	Grampian
River Spey-Insh Marshes	Highland
Cairngorms	Highland
	Grampian
Loch of Skene	Grampian[1]
Fowlsheugh	Grampian[1]
Lochnagar	Grampian
Drumochter Hills	Highland
	Tayside
West Mainland Moors	Orkney
North Mainland Coast	Orkney
South Westray Coast	Orkney
East Sanday	Orkney
Croussa Field and the Heogs	Shetland
Mousa	Shetland
Rousay (part)	Orkney
North Ronaldsay Coast	Orkney
Southeastern Stronsay	Orkney
Eday	Orkney
Troup, Pennan and Lion Heads	Grampian
St. Cyrus	Grampian
Buchan Ness to Collieston Coast	Grampian
Sumburgh Head	Shetland
Monadhliath	Highland
Alvie	Highland
Ben Alder	Highland
Abernethy Forest	Highland[1]
Kinveachy	Highland
Creag Meagaidh	Highland
Lochs of Spiggie and Brow	Shetland
Mill Dam, Shapinsay	Orkney
Rosehearty to Fraserburgh Coast	Grampian
Orphir and Stenness Hills	Orkney
Keelylang	Orkney
Loch of Isbister	Orkney
Blackpark and Gutcher, Yell	Shetland
Loch Oire	Grampian
Loch Vaa	Highland
Glen Tanar	Grampian
Muir of Dinnet	Grampian
Moorland Areas, Central Shetland	Shetland
West Burrafirth, Shetland	Shetland
Hill of Colvadale and Sobul	Shetland
An Socach-Carn a Gheoidh	Grampian
Loch Lomond	Strathclyde
	Central
Tiree and Coll	Strathclyde
Treshnish Isles	Strathclyde
Gruinart Flats, Islay	Strathclyde[1]
Bridgend Flats, Islay	Strathclyde[1]
Laggan Peninsula, Islay	Strathclyde[1]
Eilean na Muice Duibhe, Islay	Strathclyde[1]
Glac na Criche, Islay	Strathclyde[1]
Feur Lochain, Islay	Strathclyde[1]
Rhinns of Islay	Strathclyde
Islay; the Oa	Strathclyde
Inner Clyde Estuary	Strathclyde

Site	*Local Authority*
Rhunahaorine Point	Strathclyde
Machrihanish and Tangy Loch	Strathclyde
Ailsa Craig	Strathclyde[1]
Loch Ken and Dee Marshes	Dumfries and Galloway[1]
Lochinch and Torrs Warren	Dumfries and Galloway
Wigtown Bay	Dumfries and Galloway
North Colonsay and Western Cliffs	Strathclyde
Sanda	Strathclyde
Castle Loch Lochmaben	Dumfries and Galloway
Caenlochan	Tayside
	Grampian
Montrose Basin	Tayside
Loch of Kinnordy	Tayside
Loch of Lintrathen	Tayside[1]
Tay-Isla Valley	Tayside
Loch Leven	Tayside
Firth of Tay	Tayside
	Fife
Cameron Reservoir	Fife
Eden Estuary, Tentsmuir Point and Abertay Sands	Fife
	Tayside
Forth Islands	Lothian[1]
	Fife
Flanders Moss and Lake of Menteith	Central
Gladhouse Reservoir	Lothian[1]
Fala Flow	Lothian
Westwater	Borders
St. Abb's Head to Fast Castle	Borders
Greenlaw Moor and Hule Moss	Borders
Hoselaw Loch	Borders[1]
South Tayside Goose Roosts	Tayside[1]
Firth of Forth	Lothian
	Fife
	Central
Upper Solway Flats and Marches	Dumfries and Galloway[1]

[1] Indicates designated site.

HIV/AIDS and Drug Abuse

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set out the criteria used by him in allocation resources to health boards for their work in *(a)* HIV/AIDS and *(b)* drug misuse including the criteria in respect of (i) education and (ii) prevention in these areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 7 June 1993]:* Allocations to assist health boards in responding to the extra burdens imposed by HIV and AIDS are being made in 1993-94 by means of service agreements with the management executive of the national health service in Scotland. The agreements take into account the number of HIV and AIDS cases in each health board area and the estimated costs of treatment and care. For prevention activity, including public education campaigns, the allocations include an amount calculated according to weighted capitation principles. HIV and AIDS allocations may also be used for relevant activities to counter drug misuse; but in addition some £2·4 million is being made available in 1993-94 specifically for drug misuse purposes. Of this amount, some £1·3 million has been allocated to four health boards in support of specific projects. The remainder has been divided among all health boards on the weighted capitation basis.

Social Housing (Transfers)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the organisations awarded grants to help those in the social housing sector to move from one area to another, the sums awarded in each case, and the nature of the work that each grant will pay for.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 14 June 1993]:* Grant is given to HOMES—Housing Organisations Mobility and Exchange Services—which is a national organisation acting as a clearing house for public sector tenants who wish to move between one local authority area and another. It operates two schemes—a national mobility scheme under which members agree to commit 1 per cent. of their net lettings in any one year to mobility applicants, and a tenants exchange scheme which facilitates swaps between council tenants. Grant is provided by the Department of the Environment, the Scottish Office, the Welsh Office and the Department of the Environment in Northern Ireland, and the Scottish contribution in 1993-94, calculated on a formula related to the activity taking place in Scotland, will be a maximum of £121,015.

This grant will facilitate national mobility scheme moves and exchanges involving moves of tenants within, or to and from, Scotland, and will also assist towards funding of a development worker for Scotland who is to be appointed during the course of 1993-94.

Housing and Community Care

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those projects awarded a grant for 1993-94 which promote or develop effective links between housing services and community care, and the amount awarded to each.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 14 June 1993]:* Support for projects combining housing and community care will come from a number of Government programmes in 1993-94. Grants totalling £514,000 have been awarded through the mental illness specific grant, to projects designed to increase community based mental health facilities, including special housing. In addition, £15 million of bridging finance has been made available to health boards for community care projects, some of which may well involve housing. Grants totalling £5·978 million have already been made under the urban programme for hostel and other accommodation, day care services, and home care for the elderly; and further grants may be made during 1993-94. A total of £135,000 has been made available to voluntary housing bodies for community care, including provision for the elderly.

In addition, Scottish Homes makes grants to housing associations which promote effective links between housing and community care including in particular grants made under the new revenue funding arrangements known as the special needs allowance package (SNAP) to meet the additional housing management costs involved in providing for people with special needs. It is estimated that SNAP grants in 1993-94 will amount to around £4 million.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) who are the members of the review body currently considering the further sale of assets of the Forestry Commission; and when she expects the review body to report;

(2) what consideration is being given to the further sale of assets of the Forestry Commission; and if she will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 14 June 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 20 April 1993 at column *89*.

In respect of current disposals, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for the Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) on 1 April 1993 at column *392*.

Prescribed Process Regulations

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 19 May, *Official Report*, column 218, what prosecutions have been undertaken resulting from breach of the prescribed process regulations since 31 July 1992.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 14 June 1993]:* The results of a survey on the operation of local authority air pollution control in Scotland during its first year (1 April 1992 to 31 March 1993) are currently being analysed. From 54 returns so far received from the 56 district and islands councils, the survey indicates that no prosecutions were undertaken during that period.

Dounreay

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the radiological and economic consequences of the spillage of radioactive thorium at building D1203 at the nuclear power development establishment at Dounreay on 27 March.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 14 June 1993]:* The spillage of radioactive thorium at building D1203 at the AEA technology plant at Dounreay on 27 March was contained entirely within the plant. It did not result in any increased radiation exposure of plant personnel and had no environmental effects.

The economic consequences of the incident are a matter for the management of AEA Technology.

EDUCATION

Special Needs

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to continue to make provision for local education authorities to plan and review the education of all children with special needs within their area.

Mr. Forth: The Education Bill currently before Parliament would strengthen provision for all pupils with special educational needs in an area. It would put duties on the funding agency and on the local education authority to take account of the need for making suitable SEN provision where they have responsibility for planning school places in an area. It provides for further co-operative arrangements between the sectors over local SEN provision.

Responsibility for making provision for the majority of pupils with SEN rests with school governors, who will be required to formulate and report on their policies for children with SEN. Schools' performance will be systematically inspected against their policies by independent inspectors. The Bill would require the Secretary of State to issue a code of practice to which local education authorities and all maintained school must have regard in respect of pupils with SEN. It provides for local education authorities to make available SEN support services to grant-maintained and local education authority-maintained schools to assist governors.

The duties of local education authorities towards pupils who may need an assessment and a statement and their duty to review all the arrangements for pupils with SEN are reinforced in the Bill.

Teachers (Clerical Support)

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much money was spent in each of the last five years on clerical support for teachers in schools.

Mr. Forth: Information is collected centrally only for schools' expenditure on administration and clerical staff combined. For the five years up to 1991-92, the latest year for which information on actual spending is available, this expenditure was as follows:

Local education authority-maintained nursery, primary, secondary and special schools England

Year	*Total expenditure*[1] *£ thousand*
1987-88	196,520
1988-89	219,020
1989-90	260,678
1990-91	335,181
1991-92	[2]404,267

[1] Total expenditure on administrative and clerical staff, cash, £ thousands.
[2] Provisional.

Note:
"Administrative and clerical staff" includes such staff as school secretaries, clerks, typists, receptionists and telephonists. Details on premises related staff (caretakers, etc.) and education support staff (such as laboratory technicians) are collected separately.

London School of Economics (Fees)

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received on the plans by the London School of Economics to charge fees for university tuition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) on 14 June, *Official Report*, column *420*.

Market Testing

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list all the market tests that have taken place in his Department since November 1992 and

indicate, in each case, whether the result was the maintenance of in-house provision, or whether the service was contracted out.

Mr. Boswell: The Department's market tests listed in Cmnd. 2101 for completion by 30 September 1993 are still in progress.

Science and Technology

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether he will designate one of his Ministers to be responsible for his Department's contribution to the Government's science and technology "Forward Look."

Mr. Boswell: Paragraph 2.37 of the recent White Paper "Realising Our Potential—A Strategy for Science, Engineering and Technology" describes the preparation of the "Forward Look" by the Office of Science and Technology, and the participation of Government Departments through the existing, well-established machinery of the official and ministerial Cabinet Committees on Science and Technology.

Industrial Research

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether the Higher Education Funding Council for England will take industrially relevant research into account in future research assessment exercises.

Mr. Boswell: Universities and colleges were free to submit evidence of the full range of their research in the assessment exercise undertaken last year by the Universities Funding Council. This included research related to the needs of industry. The White Paper "Realising our Potential: A Strategy for Science, Engineering and Technology" indicates that the Government will expect research relevant to industrial and other users to be taken into account in future assessment exercises.

Near-market Research

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what his Department's policy is with regard to the funding of near-market research.

Mr. Boswell: I refer the hon. Member to paragraphs 2.20 to 2.22 of the White Paper "Realising Our Potential —A Strategy for Science, Engineering and Technology". Funding for research through the Higher Education Funding Council for England is intended to support mainly basic and strategic research.

Education Expenditure

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what has been the real increase in education expenditure on matters within the responsibility of local education authorities since 1979, in money and percentage terms; and what is *(a)* the level by which LEAs in total and *(b)* the extent to which each individual LEA currently spends beyond its education standard spending assessment SSA, according to the latest expenditure figures available, in money and percentage terms.

Mr. Forth: Total local authority expenditure on education in England has increased by £3,197 million or 17·6 per cent., in real terms between 1979-80 and 1991-92, the latest year for which data are available. This comparison does not allow for the transfer or responsibility for about £900 million—in 1992-93 prices —of expenditure on local authority higher education to the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council from 1 April 1989.

Information on LEAs' budgeted expenditure is taken from returns to the Department of Environment. The figures for English LEAs' education budgets for 1992-93, both individually and in total, together with the figures for their overall education standard spending assessments and the differences in cash and percentage terms, are set out in the table.

For several reasons, it is necessary to be cautious about drawing conclusions from the figures. Education SSAs are not spending targets as LEAs are free to determine their own spending priorities. The budget figures were provided at the beginning of the 1992-93 financial year. Outturn expenditure may well be different. LEAs may also not recognise the budget figures because their budget returns have been adjusted by the Department of Environment to make them comparable with their education SSAs.

Education SSAs and Education budget figures for 1992-93
(in £ million)

Local education authority	*Budget*	*Education SSA*	*Difference*	*Percentage difference*
Corporation of London	2·12	0·65	1	225
Camden	70·04	64·92	5	8
Greenwich	105·98	107·46	−1	−1
Hackney	112·93	117·39	−4	−4
Hammersmith	61·19	57·75	3	6
Islington	85·07	86·45	−1	−2
Kensington	47·22	38·33	9	23
Lambeth	132·04	139·39	−7	−5
Lewisham	112·63	114·07	−1	−1
Southwark	103·23	112·36	−9	−8
Tower Hamlets	118·55	123·69	−5	−4
Wandsworth	105·83	100·62	5	5
Westminster	77·25	55·93	21	38
Barking	66·26	61·55	5	8
Barnet	110·16	113·29	−3	−3
Bexley	77·33	86·54	−9	−11
Brent	125·90	134·22	−8	−6
Bromley	93·29	97·61	−4	−4
Croydon	132·56	129·40	3	2

Local education authority	Budget	Education SSA	Difference	Percentage difference
Ealing	122·72	130·81	−8	−6
Enfield	115·86	113·70	2	2
Haringey	96·20	103·80	−8	−7
Harrow	80·81	79·91	1	1
Havering	89·57	89·17	0	0
Hillingdon	87·97	88·11	0	0
Hounslow	86·55	90·25	−4	−4
Kingston	50·16	46·18	4	9
Merton	61·47	59·31	2	4
Newham	111·28	133·21	−22	−16
Redbridge	90·02	92·45	−2	−3
Richmond	44·56	44·36	0	0
Sutton	55·39	61·32	−6	−10
Waltham Forest	100·55	104·85	−4	−4
Birmingham	428·05	485·14	−57	−12
Coventry	132·46	122·99	9	8
Dudley	117·67	108·75	9	8
Sandwell	128·19	125·30	3	2
Solihull	73·29	72·26	1	1
Walsall	106·39	107·18	−1	−1
Wolverhampton	112·80	110·65	2	2
Knowsley	74·56	78·89	−4	−5
Liverpool	206·93	214·97	−8	−4
St. Helens	76·65	73·34	3	0
Sefton	110·25	110·45	0	0
Wirral	132·23	135·67	−3	−3
Bolton	105·87	105·65	0	0
Bury	68·74	63·93	5	8
Manchester	198·76	203·67	−5	−2
Oldham	95·63	94·07	2	2
Rochdale	84·40	86·46	−2	−2
Salford	87·54	89·33	−2	−2
Stockport	105·97	99·82	6	6
Tameside	82·69	85·35	−3	−3
Trafford	78·55	77·58	1	1
Wigan	124·23	116·64	8	7
Barnsley	77·08	80·67	−4	−4
Doncaster	121·43	119·05	2	2
Rotherham	104·55	101·40	3	3
Sheffield	190·79	180·80	10	6
Bradford	213·28	221·85	−9	−4
Calderdale	77·61	77·24	0	0
Kirklees	153·04	157·65	−5	−3
Leeds	267·68	261·96	6	2
Wakefield	120·62	114·54	6	5
Gateshead	80·07	72·77	7	10
Newcastle	104·88	99·42	5	5
North Tyneside	75·25	73·66	2	2
South Tyneside	63·62	60·54	3	5
Sunderland	113·41	118·37	−5	−4
Isles of Scilly	1·36	1·30	0	4
Avon	350·59	315·24	35	11
Bedfordshire	220·25	222·71	−2	−1
Berkshire	272·03	287·14	−15	−5
Buckinghamshire	255·58	259·97	−4	−2
Cambridgeshire	249·28	242·20	7	3
Cheshire	370·99	359·37	12	3
Cleveland	253·42	247·82	6	2
Cornwall	170·01	175·42	−5	−3
Cumbria	183·70	173·35	10	6
Derbyshire	370·13	329·86	40	12
Devon	347·72	343·10	5	1
Dorset	203·35	200·12	3	2
Durham	234·13	223·95	10	5
East Sussex	224·66	216·96	8	4
Essex	557·99	580·81	−23	−4
Gloucestershire	192·54	183·41	9	5
Hampshire	576·19	562·64	14	2
Hereford and Worcester	241·87	241·88	0	0
Hertfordshire	383·25	370·18	13	4
Humberside	361·53	341·30	20	6
Isle of Wight	46·24	47·54	−1	−3
Kent	539·75	568·13	−28	−5
Lancashire	563·79	553·25	11	2
Leicestershire	361·69	344·49	17	5
Lincolnshire	219·32	221·98	−3	−1
Norfolk	261·97	260·61	1	1

Local education authority	Budget	Education SSA	Difference	Percentage difference
North Yorkshire	252·93	243·84	9	4
Northamptonshire	225·98	223·80	2	1
Northumberland	119·79	111·40	8	8
Nottinghamshire	402·22	383·42	19	5
Oxfordshire	201·34	187·52	14	7
Shropshire	164·61	154·01	11	7
Somerset	172·71	159·23	13	8
Staffordshire	380·42	374·64	6	2
Suffolk	229·66	215·27	14	7
Surrey	327·78	326·54	1	0
Warwickshire	182·07	172·77	9	5
West Sussex	225·49	236·04	−11	−4
Wiltshire	210·12	202·44	8	4
Total	18,536·21	18,352·70	184	1

Notes:
[1] Information on budgeted expenditure is taken from Local Authorities' returns to the Department of Environment on forms RA92/93 and RA(SG)92/93. Figures have been repriced to outturn.
[2] The education budgets for Inner London authorities have been adjusted so as to exclude expenditure funded through education grant for Inner London authorities, and make them comparable with education SSAs. Inner London education grants are paid to provide, through the support of expenditure on education, transitional help to local tax-payers in Inner London boroughs and in the City of London where the authorities inherited responsibility for the education service from the Inner London Education Authority.
[3] Figures on budgets and education SSAs have been rounded to 2 decimal places.

Further and Higher Education Funding Councils

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the names of the members of the regional committees of the further education and higher education funding councils who have already been nominated, together with the regional committees to which no appointment has yet been made and the date on which any outstanding appointment will be made; which organisations were consulted on the appointments; and what was the form and nature of any such consultation.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend announced on 14 April the appointment of the chairmen of seven of the nine regional advisory committees of the Further Education Funding Council. The chairmen are:
Greater London:—Mr. Trevor Thomas CBE
Northern:—Mr. Haydn Biddle
North West:—Mr. Peter Blount
Yorkshire and Humberside:—Mr. Terry Bramall
East Midlands:—Dr. Eric Cliffe
Eastern:—Councillor Paul White
South East:—Mr. Harry Morris CBE

The chairmen of the West Midlands and the South West regional committees will be announced shortly.

My right hon. Friend intends that there should be 12 members of each regional committee, who will be appointed in a personal capacity apart from the two members of each committee who will be representatives of the training and enterprise councils in each region. The membership will be announced as soon as possible.

Suggestions for members have been received from a variety of sources, including a number of bodies which were invited to suggest candidates from a business, local authority, special educational needs and adult learners' background, in order to supplement the names already submitted. These bodies were the CBI, the Association of British Chambers of Commerce, the Engineering Employers Federation, the local authority associations, SKILL, the National Bureau for Students with Disabilities, and the National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England does not have regional committees.

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what remuneration is to be paid to the chairmen and members of the regional committees of the further and higher education funding councils.

Mr. Boswell: There is no salary or fee for the chairmen and members of the Further Education Funding Council's regional committees. Travelling and subsistence allowances are paid by the Funding Council under the usual arrangements. The Higher Education Funding Council for England does not have regional committees.

Physical Education

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the Government's policy on maintaining physical education as an integral part of the national curriculum.

Mr. Robin Squire: The importance of physical education in our schools is not in doubt. As a foundation subject of the national curriculum physical education is compulsory for all pupils aged five to 16 in maintained schools in England and Wales.

EC Education Council

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the outcome of the Council of EC Education Ministers which met on Friday 11 June.

Mr. Boswell: The Council adopted a resolution on vocational education and training in the 1990s; the Council and the Ministers of Education meeting within the Council adopted conclusions on co-operation in higher education, agreed to extend by a year the mandate of a sub-committee of the Education Committee concerning long-term arrangements for the European Schools, exchanged views on the entry of all young people into working life and society, and discussed the Commission's guidelines for Community action in the field of education and training.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Structural Steel

Mr. Spellar: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received about the dumping of structural steel in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Heseltine: Whilst I have received representations about the dumping of steel in the United Kingdom I have received no representations about dumping of structural steel from countries outside the Community.

Ceramic Industry

Ms Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what negotiations in the current general agreement on tariffs and trade round affect the ceramic industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The ceramic industry is primarily affected by the market access negotiations on reductions in customs duties. My Department was made aware of the industry's interests at an earlier stage of the negotiations, in particular as regards the very high duties on some imports into the United States, and these are being addressed by the European Commission in the negotiations.

Fuel Cell Research

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list all the projects supported by his Department since 1990 involving research into fuel cell technology giving the amount of money involved in each project.

Mr. Eggar: Since 1990 the DTI has supported 16 projects on advanced fuel cells worth over £4 million in total. They are:

	£
Composite Solid Oxide Fuel Cell (SOFC) Membrane Development	910,000
System Integration Study for SOFC Combined Heat and Power (CHP) Systems	64,000
Internal Reforming on SOFC Anodes	219,000
Evaluation of Integral Planar SOFC Concept—Phase 1	49,000
Evaluation of Fuel Cell Components	85,000
Development of Membrane Electrode Assemblies	216,000
Experimental Studies on Low Cost Solid Polymer Fuel Cells (SPFCs)	2,000,000
Development of Cathode Material for SOFCs	79,000
Development of High Temperature Bonds for SOFCs	50,000
Scale up of Components for SOFCs	70,000
SPFC Applications Study	50,000
SOFC Design Study	62,000
Initial Studies on MEAs	127,000
Fuel Cell Membrane Testing	13,000
SPFC Design Study	51,000
Implications of Design, Materials and Fabrication for SOFCs	55,000

A further 13 projects, worth about £5 million in total, are currently being considered.

In addition, the DTI has funded several consultancy studies related to fuel cells.

Export Control

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he has taken to ensure that the policy described in the British Overseas Trade Board's forward plan published on 9 June will take into account current export control regulations on sensitive technology and equipment exports.

Mr. Needham: The opportunities outlined in the British Overseas Trade Board's "Forward Plan" take full account of current export control regulations. On page 84, exporters are reminded of export controls and are encouraged to contact the DTI's Export Control Organisation to ensure that they are not breaching any current regulations. Copies of the "Forward Plan" are available in the Library of the House.

Market Testing

Ms Mowlam: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list all the market tests that have taken place in his Department since November 1992 and indicate, in each case, whether the result was the maintenance of in-house provision, or whether the service was contracted out.

Mr. Eggar: In my Department's current market testing programme no market tests, involving competition between the existing in-house service providers and the private sector, have been completed as yet. However, invitations to tender are now beginning to be issued.

Export Promotion

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what role and responsibilities he envisages for the 100 business people he plans to recruit from the private sector to assist with export promotion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Needham: I expect the export promoters recruited from business to go out and encourage companies throughout the country to take advantage of opportunities to export. With their business skills and experience, and their first-hand knowledge of specific overseas markets, the export promoters will be able to offer informed advice and assistance which will add to and complement our existing export services. I am sure they will help us to deliver our best ever service to British exporters.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many of the 100 business people he plans to recruit from the private sector to assist the DTI with export promotion have been secured; and when he expects to have completed the recruitment process.

Mr. Needham: We now have 31 export promoters on secondment from the private sector, including a few who are still in the process of joining my Department. In addition more than 20 other candidates are currently under consideration, and more offers come in every day. We have also received assurances from a number of companies that they are actively identifying high-calibre people to put forward as they become available. We intend to complete the recruitment process by the end of the year.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent initiatives he has undertaken and intends to take to assist the promotion of British exports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: In addition to policies to improve the climate for business, such as the deregulation initiative, we have taken a number of steps to improve the already excellent services the Government offers businesses wishing to export.

Under the newly created post of director general of export promotion, we have set up two new divisions concentrating solely on promotional work. They will have up to 60 extra staff to allow individual coverage of the United Kingdom's top 80 export markets. We are also recruiting 100 men and women from the private sector on secondment to bring their skills and experience to assist these divisions in their export promotion work.

Under the overseas projects board, we are establishing sector task forces chaired by senior business people to co-ordinate our efforts to secure the business that flows from major overseas projects. The Government have also made available to United Kingdom exporters more than £2 billion of additional export credit cover for key markets over the next three years, and ECGD has reduced its premium rates by an average of more than 25 per cent. over the last year.

These initiatives will build substantially on the current matrix of support available to help our exporters under the joint DTI and FCO overseas trade services operation worldwide, to ensure that ever greater numbers of United Kingdom exporters get the additional support they deserve to help them win in world markets.

Lumsden Machine Co.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what monitoring has been carried out by the insolvency service since receivers were called in to the Lumsden Machine Co., Gateshead; and whether the receiver has subcontracted work in the company back to enterprises in which the original beneficial owners of the company have an interest.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My Department's insolvency service has no power to intervene in the day to day conduct of receiverships and does not, therefore, monitor such cases on an individual basis.

In this case, officials have spoken to the receiver's office who have confirmd that one of the company's contracts which remained incomplete at the date of the receiver's appointment required a small amount of further work involving specialised equipment. The receiver has confirmed that he sub-contracted this work to an associated company, but the sub-contract was on a commercial basis and at a proper market price and enabled the expeditious completion of the contract for the benefit of the receivership.

Coal Industry

Mr. David Porter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement regarding developments in the Government's policies relating to the coal industry since publication of the White Paper on coal.

Mr. Eggar: Subsidy. The Government indicated in the White Paper "The Prospects for Coal" that it was willing to offer financial support to both British Coal and private sector coal producers who could secure a genuinely additional market for United Kingdom underground coal for electricity generation at world-related prices where this was consistent with the relevant European Community provisions.

Evidence received by the coal review, and the separate review conducted by the Trade and Industry Select Committee, argued that there was potential for an additional market for coal for electricity generation, and that a subsidy related to the difference between world-related prices and production costs could offer the United Kingdom coal industry the chance to secure that market.

The Government have offered to enable the industry to explore this opportunity by being prepared to offer such a subsidy. It is now up to the United Kingdom coal industry to demonstrate that it can achieve additional sales.

We invite underground coal producers, and prospective coal producers who are seeking licences for closing British Coal pits, to provide us with firm evidence of the additional sales for electricity generation they believe they can secure, and the amount of subsidy they require. This should be backed by supporting information including a comparison of the proposed price with world market prices, expected production costs etc. Once we have had time to assess the information provided we shall make a further announcement on arrangements for the subsidy.

Generators' Coal Stocks

The Government have issued directions under section 34 of the Electricity Act 1989 to National Power and PowerGen, requiring them to hold stocks of coal at power stations sufficient to enable normal electricity supplies to be maintained for a period of nine months in the event of a complete interruption of supplies from British Coal. In 1992-93 the stock levels required varied from some 10 million to 20 million tonnes depending on the time of year. The stocks held by the two electricity generators at the end of May 1993 stood at approximately 31 million tonnes.

The Government are reviewing the required stocking level for 1993-94 and subsequent years with the electricity generators.

Working Practices

Coal Mines Regulation Act 1908

The White Paper "The Prospects for Coal" announced the Government's intention, subject to a consultation process, to remove the impediment to efficiency represented by the limits placed on undergound working hours by the Coal Mines Regulation Act 1908. The Department issued a consultation document inviting representations by 28 May 1993. The Department expects to make its decision known in the course of the summer.

150 Man Limit

In the White Paper "The Prospects of Coal", the Government set out their intention to legislate, as soon as opportunity allowed, to remove the restriction in section 36(2) of the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946 under which British Coal is only able to license mines at which the number of persons employed to work below ground is at no time likely to exceed, or greatly to exceed, 150. The Government's present intention is that such legislation should enable this restriction to be lifted, where

appropriate, in respect of licences that are in existence at the time the legislation comes into force as well as future licences.

Matters Consequent on Privatisation

The White Paper "The Prospects for Coal" reaffirmed the Government's intention to bring forward the legislation necessary to privatise the coal industry as rapidly as possible, and set out the Government's proposal to establish a new public sector body, to be known as the Coal Authority, which would be responsible for licensing all coal mining activity, including that in existing British Coal mines and all current and future private sector mining operations, but which would itself be prohibited from mining.

The Government's present intention is that licences issued by British Coal under current legislation, and the associated agreements, should be allowed to run their term, with the terms materially unchanged except by agreement. The coal authority would take over British Coal's role as licensor under these licences and its title to the land, property, coal mines and coal reserves concerned. Where British Coal has rights and obligations as mine operator in relation to licensees in respect of interaction between mines the Government's present intention is that those rights and obligations should attach to whoever is licensed by the coal authority to operate the British Coal mine concerned—which might for a time continue to be British Coal.

Refractory Industry

Mr. Ashton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on what grounds he has changed his policy on the EC anti-dumping action with regard to the importing of sintered magnesite refractory materials from China; what studies he has made of the effect of his change in policy on the British refractory industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 15 June 1993]:* My Department is currently consulting interested parties in the United Kingdom about a European Commission proposal for a definitive anti-dumping duty on dead-burned (sintered) magnesite from China. I shall then decide the United Kingdom's response to the proposal.

PA Management Consultants

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the projects undertaken by PA management consultants for his Department in the last three years.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 15 June 1993]:* The consultancy contracts awarded by the DTI to PA Management Consultants over the last three years are as listed.

List of projects undertaken by PA Management Consultants for the DTI in the last three years

- Telecommunications Market Advisor
- Visiting Engineers scheme
- Esprit—CIME support services
- Study of washing machine: drafting specification for ECO label
- Evaluation of Regional Selective Assistance
- Eureka response handling unit ADW's successor
- Successful purchaser/suppliers relationships studies portfolio
- Cleaner Technologies stage 11 study
- Environmental legislation: future of batteries and fuel cells
- Micromechanics: invitation of Eureka projects
- Enterprise Counsellor training sessions
- Evaluation of Regional Selective Assistance—second stage
- Evaluation of Task Force programme
- Environment Northern seas conference
- DTI communications strategy study
- Personnel management strategy study
- Evaluation of NPL programme on conformance
- ITS Quality management services (QMS) project
- Departmental IS strategy study
- IS strategy scoping study in DTI's regulatory business area
- Business seminar for DTI/ITS staff
- United States biotechnology report
- Study to measure, monitor and evaluate the open systems phase 2 programme
- Regional policy research
- Audit of communications study
- Support to UK Eureka unit
- New managing '90s lead booklet
- Materials Matter 11: Thematic proposal: stereo lithography
- Feasibility study—Factory of the future
- Update of the report manufacturing into the 90's
- Emerging generic technologies
- Quality initiative in the services Eastcote computer centre BS5750 certification
- Network security study
- Wan development project
- Activities for generic technologies pilot study
- ITS quality management services (QMS) project—second stage
- Support and assistance in the production of a series of six videos
- Market advisor to Telecommunications and Posts division of DTI
- Resource account for DTI
- Market testing of DTI's central training function
- Barriers inhibiting the development and growth of small and medium sized businesses and identification of research gaps
- Study on the requirements for calibration of Coordinate measuring machines
- Future of Warren Spring Laboratory
- Eureka feasibility study
- Review of client management systems
- Report of Warren Spring investigation

The figures do not include contracts issued by those executive agencies which have delegated authority to engage consultants.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Civil Servants (Directorships)

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what conditions or guidelines have been set down relating to the appointment of former civil servants, on or shortly after taking early retirement, to non-executive directorships of executive agencies.

Mr. David Davis: No special conditions or guidelines have been set down concerning the appointment of retired civil servants as non-executive members of executive agency boards. The normal scheme of rules relating to payments made under the principal civil service pension scheme (PCSPS) in the event of re-employment would apply as appropriate.

Market Testing

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will give details for each of the services provided externally as a result of market testing *(a)* the

cost saving, *(b)* the quality of service charges and *(c)* the change in the number of people employed, compared with the in-house provision of the service;

(2) how many market-testing initiatives have *(a)* now been completed, *(b)* are currently under way and *(c)* are planned; and if he will give details of the initiatives in each category;

(3) if he will give details of the results of the market-testing exercises undertaken to date; and whether each testing exercise indicated that the service should be provided in-house or externally.

Mr. Waldegrave: Comprehensive information is not held centrally. But when the current market testing programme for the period to September 1993 is completed, I shall publish aggregated results for the civil service as a whole in line with the citizens charter principle of providing more information on Government activities.

Research Councils

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster who will conduct the study he is commissioning of the detailed allocation of responsibilities between the new research councils.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have asked Sir David Phillips to conduct the study, backed by the full resources of the Office of Science and Technology. He will be working closely with the research councils, other Government Departments, and representatives of industry and the scientific community.

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he is taking to ensure that more research council staff are recruited from industry.

Mr. Waldegrave: The recruitment of more senior staff from industry will be a matter in due course for individual research councils, having regard to their charter obligations and mission statements.

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he is taking to encourage industrially oriented research organisations to strengthen their links with their local business communities.

Mr. Waldegrave: I and my officials are in frequent contact with members of the Association of Independent Research and Technology Organisations (AIRTO). I am impressed by their current links with local business communities. AIRTO members are fully behind the plans for a network of one stop shops being progressed by the President of the Board of Trade and are also actively engaged in the postgraduate training partnerships which have strong local links.

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to appoint the Director General of Research Councils; and if the appointment will be the subject of advertisement and open competition.

Mr. Waldegrave: The post of director general of the research councils will be advertised and the appointment made in due course through open competition.

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to announce the membership and remit of the Director General of Research Councils expert group.

Mr. Waldegrave: An announcement will be made at the appropriate time, following appointment of the director general.

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if the posts of chairman and chief executive of the new research councils will be subject to advertisement and open competition.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall inform Parliament in due course of the arrangements made for these appointments.

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if advice tendered by the Director General of Research Councils expert group will be made public.

Mr. Waldegrave: I will discuss the best way of structuring the relationship between the director general and his expert group with the former, when he is appointed.

Science and Technology

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to announce the membership and remit of the new Council for Science and Technology.

Mr. Waldegrave: In due course.

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will provide additional funds for his science and technology public awareness campaign in addition to money supplied from existing budgets.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government have made clear that they will continue to allocate public resources on the scale necessary to finance the policies in the White Paper.

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster under what circumstances he expects reports of the Council for Science and Technology to be withheld from publication.

Mr. Waldegrave: Reports generated by the council will normally be made openly available. The need to respect commercially sensitive information would be one factor which might prevent this.

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what criteria he uses for the commission of external advice on science and technology matters.

Mr. Waldegrave: Commissioning external advice is considered on a case-by-case basis when policy decisions on science or technology issues would benefit from an informed contribution from high-quality independent experts.

Scientists and Engineers

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what research was commissioned by his office on the future supply of and demand for scientists and engineers qualified to PhD level prior to the publication of the White Paper, "Realising our Potential".

Mr. Waldegrave: A list of the research studies which informed the White Paper on the supply of scientific manpower is provided in section G of the bibliography.

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to announce the membership and remit of the new co-ordinating committee for the science and engineering research base.

Mr. Waldegrave: In due course.

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the component parts of the science and engineering base as defined in his recent White Paper, "Realising our Potential", and their level of funding in each year since 1979 in cash terms and at constant prices.

Mr. Waldegrave: The science and engineering base of the United Kingdom may be considered in terms of the research and postgraduate training capacity of:

(a) Universities and colleges of higher education (HEIs),

(b) Research councils and their institutes and units,

(c) Research Council central facilities available to researchers,

(d) Internationally-based Research Council-supported facilities available to researchers

Tables 1 and 2 provide information on the basic funding provided to the separate components of the science and engineering base from the science budget and the block grants from the higher education funding councils. It has been necessary to group items (b) and (c) in the tables as disaggregated data is not consistently available over the time period requested.

Universities and research councils also receive significant funding from other sources including charities, Government Departments, industry and the EC.

Table 1: Funding of the science and engineering base (£m)

	Universities and HEIs:[1]		*Research Councils, Institutes and central facilities:*[1]	*Research Council support for international facilities*
	Block funding[2]	*Science Budget*[3]	*Science Budget*[3]	*Science Budget*[3]
1979-80	[4]359·2	125·5	147·7	44·6
1980-81	[4]441·3	158·7	182·4	42·9
1981-82	[4]494·7	173·5	223·5	42·3
1982-83	[4]600·0	186·0	237·7	45·1
1983-84	[4]616·0	201·2	247·5	54·3
1984-85	563·5	217·4	257·5	59·5
1985-86	598·3	230·8	274·5	65·9
1986-87	655·0	246·4	282·8	73·8
1987-88	695·0	276·0	291·5	90·4
1988-89	754·9	292·8	317·5	93·8
1989-90	758·2	353·4	367·0	93·6
1990-91	788·7	402·7	400·4	100·7
1991-92	880·8	414·2	406·2	105·5
[5]1992-93	895·9	519·5	426·9	107·7
[5]1993-94	857·3	618·4	430·9	114·0

[1] Research Council Institutes and HEIs also receive fundingb from other sources including charities, EC, Government Departments and industry.

[2] *Source:* Annual Review of Government-funded Research and Development 1992.
Note that the resources assigned to research are based on an estimated split of universities' spending between research and other activities; the uncertainties inherent in this process mean that the figures can only be regarded as accurate to within ± 10 per cent.

[3] *Source:* Annual accounts/Supply Estimates.

[4] Figures include humanities research—disaggregated data is not available prior to 1984-85 when £66·4 million was attributed to humanities research.

[5] Estimate.

Table 2: Funding of the science and engineering base at constant (1991-92) prices (£m)[6]

	Universities and HEIs:[1]		*Research councils, institutes and central facilities:*[1]	*Research council support for international facilities:*
	block funding[2]	*science budget*[3]	*science budget*[3]	*science budget*[3]
1979-80	[4]829·6	289·8	341·1	103·0
1980-81	[4]861·9	310·0	356·3	83·8
1981-82	[4]881·8	309·3	398·0	75·4
1982-83	[4]998·3	309·5	395·5	75·0
1983-84	[4]979·3	319·9	393·5	86·3
1984-85	852·5	328·9	389·6	90·0
1985-86	858·4	331·1	393·8	94·5
1986-87	909·7	342·2	392·8	102·5
1987-88	915·7	363·6	384·1	119·1
1988-89	927·4	359·7	390·0	115·2
1989-90	873·5	407·1	422·8	107·8
1990-91	840·9	429·3	426·9	107·4
1991-92	880·8	414·2	406·2	105·5
[5]1992-93	865·6	501·9	412·5	104·1
[5]1993-94	1806·5	581·7	405·4	107·2

[1] Research Council Institutes and HEIs also receive funding from other sources including charities, EC, Government departments and industry.

[2] *Source:* Annual review of Government-funded research and development 1992.
Note that the resources assigned to research are based on an estimated split of universities' spending between research and other activities; the uncertainties inherent in this process means that the figures can only be regarded as accurate to within ± 10 per cent.

[3] *Source:* Annual accounts/supply estimates.

[4] Figures include humanities research—disaggregated data is not available prior to 1984-85.

[5] Estimate.

[6] GDP deflators used are as follows:

Year	*Percentage*
1979-80	43·3
1980-81	51·2
1981-82	56·1
1982-83	60·1
1983-84	62·9
1984-85	66·1
1985-86	69·7
1986-87	72·0
1987-88	75·9
1988-89	81·4
1989-90	86·8
1990-91	93·8
1991-92	100·0
1992-93	103·5
1993-94	106·3

Foresight Programme

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to announce the membership of the foresight programme steering group.

Mr. Waldegrave: In due course.

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what will be the relationship between the panels of experts of the foresight programme and sector advisory bodies of the Department of Trade and Industry.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Office of Science and Technology and the Department of Trade and Industry will work

closely to ensure that the technology foresight programme receives technological and market information from technical experts and from the industrial sectors sponsored by the Department.

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if the reports of the foresight programme steering group and the panels of experts will be made public.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes.

Postgraduate Research

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he is taking to encourage industrial and academic partnerships in the provision of post-graduate research and training.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government would like to see more research students undertaking work in industrial and commercial settings. There are already a number of initiatives promoting such industrial and academic partnerships, including CASE awards, postgraduate training partnerships and engineering doctorates, and the White Paper encourages these developments.

Public Research Establishments

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster who is to undertake the Government's review of the public research establishments; what the timescale of the review will be; and if the review will be made public.

Mr. Waldegrave: The scrutiny of public sector research establishments will be undertaken over the coming months by the efficiency unit, in conjunction with Government Departments. It is normal for efficiency unit reports to be published.

Research and Development

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the total Government expenditure on research and development in each year since 1979 in cash terms and at constant prices.

Mr. Waldegrave: The table lists the expenditure (in cash and constant prices) by Government on research and development as defined in the annual review of Government funded research and development 1992. Information on expenditure on this basis is not available before 1982-83.

Year	*Cash (£ million)*	*Constant prices[1] (£ million)*	*Deflator (per cent.)*
1982-83	3,476·0	5,783·7	60·2
1983-84	3,725·0	5,920·1	62·9
1984-85	3,960·0	5,989·8	66·1
1985-86	4,248·3	6,093·2	69·7
1986-87	4,258·0	5,916·7	72·0
1987-88	4,304·6	5,669·9	75·9
1988-89	4,382·0	5,380·1	81·4
1989-90	4,629·4	5,333·3	86·8
1990-91	4,826·8	5,148·4	93·8
1991-92	5,069·7	5,069·7	100·0
1992-93	[2]5,394·3	5,211·9	103·5
1993-94	[3]5,442·0	5,117·3	106·3

[1] Base year 1991-92.
[2] Estimated outturn.
[3] Planned expenditure.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Royal Family

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the application of the value added tax regime to *(a)* members of the royal family, *(b)* transactions relating to private residences of the royal family and *(c)* transactions relating to royal palaces.

Sir John Cope: Members of the royal family, their private residences and royal palaces are subject to value added tax like private citizens and other buildings with the exception that gifts to reigning monarchs are relieved from tax on importation.

Relocation and Amalgamation

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the sections and organisations within his Department for which there are plans for relocation or amalgamation.

Mr. Nelson: There are no current plans permanently to relocate any part of the Department. The organisation of the Treasury is kept under regular review and new sections are created and existing ones amalgamated from time to time.

Monetary Policy

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes in monetary policy he plans in the light of recent discussions at the OECD; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: The Government have no such plans.

The United Kingdom's monetary policy is set to meet the Government's objective of keeping underlying inflation within the range of 1 to 4 per cent. and to bring it down to the lower part of that range by the end of the current Parliament. The level of base interest rates is consistent with sustainable growth and the Government's inflation objective.

Public Sector Borrowing Requirement

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for each year since 1980-81 the level of the PSBR; what was the contribution of the sale of assets in each year; and what were the main sources of these asset proceeds.

Mr. Portillo: The information requested is set out in the table.

	PSBR (£ million)	*Including privatisation proceeds of: (£ million)*	*Main contributors*	*(£ million)*
1980-81	12,519	210	National Enterprise Board	83
			British Aerospace	43
1981-82	8,631	493	Cable and Wireless	181
			Amersham International	64
1982-83	8,904	455	Britoil	334
			Associated British Ports	46
1983-84	9,678	1,139	BP	543
			Britoil (2nd instalment)	293
			Cable and Wireless	263
1984-85	10,134	2,050	BT	1,358
			Enterprise Oil	384
			National Enterprise Board	168
1985-86	5,622	2,706	BT (2nd instalment)	1,246
			Cable and Wireless	577
			Britoil	426
			British Aerospace	347
1986-87	3,559	4,458	British Gas	2,570
			BT (3rd instalment)	1,081
			British Airways	435
1987-88	−3,406	5,140	British Gas (2nd instalment	1,758
			Rolls-Royce	1,029
			BP	863
			BAA	534
			British Airways (2nd instalment)	419
1988-89	−14,657	7,069	BP (2nd instalment)	3,030
			British Gas	1,555
			British Steel	1,138
			BAA (2nd instalment)	689
1989-90	−7,932	4,219	BP (3rd instalment)	1,363
			British Steel (2nd instalment)	1,289
			British Gas (debentures)	800
			Water	496
1990-91	−456	5,345	Electricity (E&W)	3,134
			Water (2nd instalment)	1,487
1991-92	13,731	7,923	Electricity (E&W) (2nd instalment)	2,329
			BT	1,666
			Water (3rd instalment)	1,483
			Electricity (Scotland)	1,112
			Electricity (debentures)	1,106
1992-93	36,527	8,116	BT (2nd and 3rd instalments)	3,487
			Electricity (E&W)	1,460
			Electricity (Scotland)	899
			Debt Auctions	1,337

Sterling

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the effect of the depreciation of sterling against the ecu since September 1992 on the sterling value of European Community funding for regional and social policy initiatives; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: The main sources of funding for the Community's regional and social policies are the structural funds. Structural fund allocations are made in ecus; and the depreciation of sterling against the ecu since September 1992 is likely to result in a higher level of sterling receipts than otherwise would have been the case.

Mr. Peter Clowes

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the latest position with regard to the Government's litigation against Mr. Peter Clowes and Mrs. Pamela Clowes.

Mr. Nelson: On 8 June, the High Court granted in favour of the Government an order for damages awarded against Mr. and Mrs. Clowes to the sum of £31 million. This meets the Government's claim against them for damages in full; the Government will pursue all available assets to meet the claim by all means available.

The Government continue to pursue vigorously any claims which show the prospect of reducing the cost to the taxpayer of the *ex-gratia* payments scheme for Barlow Clowes investors.

HEALTH

Teenage Pregnancy

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* births and *(b)* abortions took place for women aged (i) under 16 years and (ii) between 16 and 19 years in each year since 1980.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table:

Live births, Stillbirths and Abortions and Conceptions in England and Wales 1980-1992

Year	Age	Live births	Stillbirths	Abortions	Conceptions[2]
1980	under 16	1,281	8	4,143	8,580
	16-19	59,473	500	37,120	108,672
1981	under 16	1,180	12	3,949	8,561
	16-19	55,380	444	36,623	106,611
1982	under 16	1,169	8	4,343	8,999
	16-19	54,266	389	36,694	104,933
1983	under 16	1,249	17	4,566	9,369
	16-19	52,810	380	36,512	102,982
1984	under 16	1,323	10	4,609	9,649
	16-19	53,185	385	38,492	108,579
1985	under 16	1,402	7	4,427	9,406
	16-19	55,527	354	39,105	109,861
1986	under 16	1,366	13	4,240	9,194
	16-19	56,040	354	39,897	109,583
1987	under 16	1,305	10	4,075	9,135
	16-19	56,240	310	38,482	114,017
1988	under 16	1,261	12	3,804	8,782
	16-19	57,480	324	40,840	111,927
1989	under 16	1,317	6	3,576	8,382
	16-19	54,226	319	38,821	109,117
1990	under 16	1,306	5	3,622	8,634
	16-19	54,235	327	37,950	106,421
1991	under 16	1,426	9	3,317	n/a
	16-19	50,970	269	33,401	
1992[1]	under 16	1,314	11	n/a	n/a
	16-19	46,547	216		

Conception figures for 1991 and 1992 and abortion figures for 1992 are not yet available.

[1] The figures given for 1992 include 17 stillbirths of 24 to 27 weeks gestation which occurred between 1 October and 31 December. On 1 October 1992, the legal definition of a stillbirth was altered: from a baby born dead after 28 weeks of completed gestation or more, to one born dead after 24 completed weeks gestation or more.

[2] The number of conceptions to girls under 16 is greater than the number of births and abortions to girls under 16, because many girls who become pregnant at age 15 will have the birth or abortion at age 16. Further, a conception in one calendar year can lead to a birth or abortion in the next calendar year.

Consultant Psychiatrists

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of consultant psychiatrists in each region and in London; and what is the number per head of population.

Dr. Mawhinney: The regional information requested is shown in the table. In inner London there were 205 consultant psychiatrists at 30 September 1991, or 8·8 per 1,000 population. These figures do not include data for the Newham and Haringey district health authorities, for which consultant data are not available, and exclude consultants working in the special health authorities.

Numbers of consultant psychiatrists by region England—30 September 1991

	Consultant psychiatrists	Consultants per 100,000 population
Northern	116	3·8
Yorkshire	101	2·8
Trent	184	3·9
East Anglia	87	4·1
North West Thames	197	5·7
North East Thames	200	5·3
South East Thames	165	4·5
South West Thames	157	5·3
Wessex	107	3·6
Oxford	111	4·3
South Western	131	4·0
West Midlands	176	3·4
Mersey	98	4·1
North Western	149	3·7
SHAs	88	n/a
ENGLAND	2,025	4·2

Notes:

(a) Figures calculated using unadjusted population figures.

(b) Since consultants are entitled to hold contracts in more than one region, an element of duplication exists in the above regional figures, ie a consultant psychiatrist can be shown in more than one region. The England figure does NOT include any such duplications.

Accident and Emergency Departments, London

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many house officers, senior house officers, registrars, senior registrars, associate specialists, staff grade and consultants are working in accident and emergency departments in London and each of the Thames regions.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is shown in the table.

Numbers of hospital staff in accident and emergency in the Inner London area and Thames regions—30 September 1991

	Inner London	North West Thames	North East Thames	South East Thames	South West Thames	SHAs
House Officer	0	0	0	0	0	0
Senior House Officer	141	140	147	108	89	0
Registrar	8	6	7	4	4	0
Senior Registrar	n.a.	4	6	5	3	1
Assistant Specialist	1	0	5	6	2	0
Staff Grade	3	9	6	3	2	0
Consultant	13	20	19	14	12	1
TOTAL	166	179	190	140	112	2

Notes:

(a) An element of duplication may exist in the above figures since doctors are entitled to hold contracts in more than one region.

(b) The number of senior registrars in accident and emergency in inner London is not available—contracts held at a regional level only.

(c) The consultant data for inner London do not include Newham and Haringey district health authorities, for which contracts are held at

regional level only.
(d) Thames regions figures include inner London figures.
(e) Pre-registration house officers are not contracted to work in accident and emergency departments.

Acute Psychiatric Beds

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of acute psychiatric beds, by region and in London.

Mr. Bowis: The information is shown in the table. Psychiatric beds are classified as short or long stay rather than acute or non-acute.

Average daily number of available short stay beds, psychiatric wards 1991-92

	Number
England	22,159
Northern RHA	1,610
Yorkshire RHA	1,750
Trent RHA	1,964
East Anglian RHA	790
North West Thames RHA	1,350
North East Thames RHA	1,786
South East Thames RHA	1,366
South West Thames RHA	1,509
Wessex RHA	1,186
Oxford RHA	906
South Western RHA	1,735
West Midlands RHA	2,263
Mersey RHA	1,323
North Western RHA	2,156
Special health authorities	466
London	3,983[1]

[1] Figure also included in Thames RHAs.
Regional totals may not add up to the England total due to rounding.

Sports Remedial Therapists

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what circumstances fund-holding general practitioners may refer patients for treatment to sports remedial therapists who are not registered practitioners.

Dr. Mawhinney: General practitioner fund holders are free to make referrals, within the scope of the scheme, provided they are satisfied that the practitioner to whom the referral is made is suitably qualified.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each regional health authority, the national health service units that will not have trust status after the fourth wave of applications.

Dr. Mawhinney: The number of units not applying for trust status in the fourth wave is shown in the table. The precise number of directly managed units remaining after the fourth wave will depend on the number of fourth wave candidates approved.

Number of directly managed units (DMUs) by region not applying for trust status in the fourth wave

Region	*Number*
East Anglian[1]	0
Mersey[1]	0
Northern[1]	0
North East Thames	16
North West Thames	2
North Western[1]	0
Oxford[1]	0
South East Thames	10
South West Thames	5
South Western[1]	0
Trent	7
Wessex[1]	0
West Midlands	3
Yorkshire	1

[1] All remaining DMUs have submitted applications for the fourth wave.

Psychiatric Hospitals

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what study she has made of the results of the closure of psychiatric hospitals in the United States of America; and what plans she has to modify Government policy in the light of this study.

Mr. Bowis: The Government are aware and keep abreast of mental health developments in the United States of America and other parts of the world and takes account of relevant experience in formulating policy.

Personal Social Services

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much, in real cash terms, was available to councils in the Northern region, for spending on personal social services in 1979; what is the amount provided for 1993-94; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: The system employed for the distribution of central Government support for local authority services has changed substantially since 1979; it is not possible therefore to give comparable figures on how much was available in that year and the current year. Expenditure in 1978-79 by local authorities in the northern region, and resources available for 1993-94, including community care, are shown in the table. Increases over the 15-year period will have been subject to population and boundary changes. For the region as a whole, the increase in expenditure reflects that for England and demonstrates the Government's commitment to the development of personal social services.

Local authority personal social services—Resources

£ million

	1978-79 Outturn	*1993-94 Standard spending*[1]	*Real terms increase (per cent.)*
Cleveland	12·8	62·9	71·3
Cumbria	8·2	46·6	98·1
Durham	12·1	62·6	80·4
Gateshead	5·3	24·8	63·2
Newcastle	11·4	37·6	15·0
Northumberland	5·7	28·0	71·3
North Tyneside	5·1	22·4	53·1
South Tyneside	4·4	19·5	54·5
Sunderland	7·9	32·7	44·3
Total	72·9	337·1	61·2

[1] Including community care.

Hospital Beds, Durham

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will make a statement on the implementation of the patients charter waiting time guarantee in the City of Durham;

(2) how many people are currently waiting for a hospital bed in the City of Durham.

Dr. Mawhinney: Waiting time information is collected centrally by health authority rather than metropolitan area. The North Durham health authority has been extremely successful in meeting the waiting time commitments in the patients charter. None of its patients have to wait more than two years for any in-patient or day case treatment or 18 months for hip or knee replacement or a cataract operation. Latest figures for 30 September 1992 show that 89 per cent. of North Durham patients had been waiting for less than a year.

Dentistry, Durham

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many courses of dental treatment were carried out in the Durham area under the NHS in 1979; and what were the equivalent figures for the last 12-month period for which figures are available.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is shown in the table.

Courses of treatment carried out in the Durham Family Health Services Authority area under the General Dental Service during 1979 and 1992-93

Year	*Under 18*[1]	*18 and over*	*Total*[1]
1979	103,630	153,160	256,790
1992-93	42,476	269,315	311,791

[1] Under the new dental contract introduced on 1 October 1990, most child treatment is undertaken under capitation where no separate course of treatment is identified. These figures are therefore not comparable.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement about the availability of NHS dental treatment in the Durham area.

Dr. Mawhinney: We are advised that patients in the Durham area have had no difficulty in registering with a national health service dentist.

Lung Cancer

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the difference in percentage terms, in lung cancer in women living in Liverpool compared with the national average; what money her Department has made available for the study of the causes of Liverpool's lung cancer cases; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Statistics on the prevalence of particular forms of cancer are not calculated. The mortality rate from a malignant neoplasm of the trachea, bronchus and lung —International Classification of Diseases, ninth revision code 162—in women normally resident in Liverpool is approximately 80 per cent. greater than the rate in England as a whole. The Department has not funded any studies of the causes of lung cancer in Liverpool. Nationally, at least 80 per cent. of deaths from lung cancer are caused by smoking.

Patient Deaths

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients died while on the waiting list for cardiac surgery in each of the last two years for which figures are available.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for State—my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville)—gave to her on 14 April at column *608*. The waiting list information requested is not available centrally.

Urgent Operations

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to place specific maximum waiting times on specific urgent operations; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: None at present. As part of the 1993-94 waiting time initiative, the national health service management executive is holding discussions with the medical professions about procedures and protocols for prioritising waiting list conditions. The usefulness of setting maximum waiting times for specific operations is an option which will be explored at these meetings.

Ambulances

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many ambulances were operating in each health authority in England in each year since 1983.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Traffic Casualties

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much has been paid to the NHS under section 158 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 in each of the last five years; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

NHS Staff (Holidays)

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many statutory and public holidays, in addition to bank holidays, are enjoyed by employees of the national health service.

Dr. Mawhinney: Staff employed on national health service Whitley terms and conditions of service are entitled to two additional days paid holiday each year.

GP Fund Holders

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many general practitioner fund holders in the Yorkshire region overspent their budgets in *(a)* 1991-92 and *(b)* in 1992-93.

Dr. Mawhinney: Five out of the 34 fund-holding units in Yorkshire region overspent their budgets in 1991-92. Information for 1992-93 is not yet available.

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 7 June, *Official Report*, column *44*, what was the Government's position on the Commission's directive on advertising of tobacco products.

Mr. Sackville: At the Health Council meeting on 27 May, the Government restated their position that adoption of the draft European Community directive on tobacco advertising is not necessary for the completion of the internal market.

Benomyl and Carbendazim

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what data exist within the Department as to the effects of Benomyl and Carbendazim—related products on women immediately prior to childbirth;

(2) what links have been established between the use of Benomyl and Carbendazim in fungicides and the incidence of anophthalmic and microphthalmic conditions in humans;

(3) what proposals the Government have for scientific inquiries into the use and effects of Benomyl and related products; and what inquiries have taken place so far.

Dr. Mawhinney: Data on the metabolic effects on animals of pesticides are produced from experiments using laboratory animals and evaluated by the independent and Government scientists who advise Ministers before any pesticide is approved for use. I refer the hon. Member to the reply the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State—my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville)—gave the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms Lynne) on 8 February at columns *478-79*, for an explanation of the approval process and the assessment of the data seen.

The data available to the Department do not indicate that Benomyl and Carbendazim-related products used as fungicides in the United Kingdom are likely to cause any adverse health effects to women or to their unborn children immediately before childbirth or throughout their pregnancies. Nor has the Department seen or been notified of any scientific reports that indicate that these products are causing adverse health effects on women or on children.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on 20 May at column *259*, which stated that the Department is commissioning research into the incidence of anophthalmia in Great Britain from the environmental epidemiological unit at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. The results of this work and the research now being undertaken by Moorfields hospital will be very carefully considered and any necessary action taken.

Alcohol Problems

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether generic monitoring of the implementation of community care will include the gathering of information on services for people with alcohol problems.

Mr. Bowis: Yes.

Benlate

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has held with Dupont in the United Kingdom on the payment of the Dupont Company of compensation in the case of damage to users of Benlate.

Mr. Sackville: None. Such matters should be resolved between an individual and the relevant manufacturer.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Eastern Bloc (Training)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what resources are currently being devoted to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's financial sector scheme for extending work experience and training in the United Kingdom and other OECD countries to assist in modernising the financial services industry in ex-eastern bloc countries; and if he will list Britain's financial services industry organisations participating in the scheme and the locations of current secondees and the lengths of their approximate periods of secondment.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 14 June 1993]:* The sum of £9·3 million is allocated to the scheme covering selection costs, air fares, induction training in Britain and British Council management charges. Training is not offered outside the United Kingdom and the scheme is limited to participants from the former Soviet Union and the Baltic states.

I am placing a list with the further details the hon. Member requested in the Library of the House.

United Kingdom Know How Fund
Chancellor's financial sector scheme

Host companies	*Town*
3I plc	London
Abbey National plc	Milton Keynes
Bank of Scotland	Edinburgh
Bank of Wales	Cardiff
Barclays Bank	London
Baring Brothers and Co. Ltd.	London
BDO Binder	London
Beachcroft Stanleys	London
Bradford and Bingley Building Society	Bingley
Close Brothers Ltd.	London
Clydesdale Bank plc	Glasgow
D. C. Gardner Group plc	London
D. K. Ray and Co.	Beaconsfield
Deutch Bank AG	London
Eagle Star Insurance Company Ltd.	Cheltenham
Equitable Life Assurance Society	Aylesbury
Equity and Law Life Assurance	High Wycombe
Ernst and Young	London
Financial Research Associates	London
Friends' Provident Life Office	Dorking
Girobank plc	Bootle
Heart of England Building Society	Warwick
Herbert Smith	London
Hogg Robinson Financial Services Ltd.	Reading
Invesco MIM Holdings Ltd.	London
Italian International Bank plc	London
Kingston Smith	London
Lazard Brothers and Co. Ltd.	London
Legal and General Group plc	London
Linklaters and Paines	London
Lloyds Bank plc	London
Maclay Murray and Spens	Edinburgh
Marsden Building Society	Nelson

Host companies	Town
Martin Currie Investment Management Ltd.	Edinburgh
Mercury Asset [illegible]agement Ltd.	London
Midland Montag[illegible]	London
Morgan Grenfell and Co. Ltd.	London
N. M. Rothschild and Sons Ltd.	London
Nabarro Nathonson	London
National Provincial Building Society	Bradford
National Provident Institution (NPI)	Tonbridge Wells
National Westminster Bank plc	London
Nationwide Building Society	Northampton
Newcastle Building Society	Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Northern Rock Building Society	Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Norton Rose	London
Principality Building Society	Cardiff
Rabin Leacock Lipman	London
Royal Bank of Scotland plc	Edinburgh
RYDEN	Edinburgh
Scottish Equitable Life Assurance Society	Edinburgh
Sedgwick Group plc	London
Shoosmiths and Harrison Solicitors	Northampton
Singer and Friedlander Ltd.	London
Slaughter and May	London
Smith New Court Securities	London
Sphere Drake Underwriting Management Ltd.	Brighton
Standard Chartered Bank	London
Stephenson Harwood	London
Sun Alliance Group	London
SunLife Assurance Society plc	London
Svenska Handelsbanken	London
Swiss Bank Corporation	London
Tods Murray WS	Edinburgh
Touche Ross	London
Woolwich Building Society	Bexleyheath
Wragge and Co.	Birmingham

Geographical distribution of current CFSS participants

Town	Count of town
Aylesbury	2
Beaconsfield	1
Bexleyheath	1
Bootle	2
Bradford	1
Brighton	1
Cardiff	1
Cheltenham	1
Edinburgh	3
London	18
Milton Keynes	2
Nelson	1
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	1
Northampton	2
Reading	1

Average lengths of current CFSS attachments

Duration range	Count of duration range
3 months	8
4-6 months	8
6-12 months	22

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Dartmoor

Ms Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the new arrangements for the management of three field monuments on Dartmoor which are in the guardianship of English Heritage.

Mr. Brooke: Yes. I am fully satisfied with the terms of the proposed agreement under which management responsibility for Grimspound, Hound Tor medieval village and Merrivale prehistoric site will be transferred to the Dartmoor National Park Authority from 1 July. These sites are the first to be transferred to local management under English Heritage's forward strategy. The park authority, with its proximity to the monuments, specialised knowledge and volunteer network, is well placed to provide the best care for these evocative sites and the best value for public money. This well illustrates the potential benefits of local management in appropriate cases.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Retirement Pensions

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what percentage of the national insurance fund has been paid out in national insurance rebates, tax reliefs and other incentives in respect of personal pensions contracted out of the state earnings-related pension scheme for 1992-93; and what is the equivalent expected percentage for the years 1993-94 and 1994-95;

(2) what was the cost of the national insurance rebates, tax reliefs and other incentives paid in respect of personal pensions contracted out of the state earnings-related pension scheme for 1992-93; and what are the equivalent expected costs for 1993-94 and 1994-95.

Mr. Hague: The information is in the table. Tax relief is not a cost to the national insurance fund and has not been included in the figures. The percentages are the estimated cost of the rebates and incentives as a percentage of the estimated gross contribution income to the national insurance fund.

Personal Pensions

Year	*Cost (£ billions)*	*Per cent*
1992-93	2·50	7
1993-94	2·65	7
1994-95	1·80	5

Source: Government Actuary's Department.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the average annual earnings of those who have contracted out of the state earnings-related pension scheme *(a)* via an occupational pension scheme and *(b)* in favour of a personal pension plan.

Mr. Hague: Information on those contracting out of the state earnings related scheme via an occupational pension scheme is not immediately available. I will write to the hon. Member as soon as it is. Such information as is available is that the average earnings of members of occupational pension schemes (including those which are not contracted out of the state earnings related scheme) in calendar year 1991, were £16,200 per annum. Average earnings of personal pension optants in the tax year 1990-91 are estimated to be £10,300 per annum.

Sources: Occupational Pension Schemes—General Household Survey. Personal Pension Schemes—1 per cent. of National Insurance contributors.

Post Offices

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his oral statement of 7 June, *Official Report*, column 23, how many of the post offices referred to receive remuneration for work carried out in addition to the basic flat-rate payment.

Mr. Hague: A number of the approximately 2,700 sub-postmasters referred to may additionally receive some small one-off payments for minor items of business which occur only intermittently and on a small scale, such as payment for the issue of concessionary bus passes. The numbers receiving such payments fluctuate considerably, but because of their intermittent nature, no central record is kept of the total number of sub-postmasters who receive them at any given time.

Alcohol Residential Centres

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security to whom housing benefit payments should be made for alcohol residential centre clients.

Mr. Burt: The same provisions governing direct payment of housing benefit apply to alcohol residential centre clients as to all other tenants. Usually the benefit is paid to tenants, although it must be paid direct to landlords if a tenant has eight weeks or more rent arrears or direct payments of income support are being made. Local authorities may also pay housing benefit direct with the claimant's consent, or if it is in the claimant's best interests to do so, or if a claimant has left a property owing rent.

Disability Benefits

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* new disability living allowance claims and *(b)* top-up claims have been refused, broken down by the reasons for refusal, in each month since February 1992 at each disability benefit centre and for the country as a whole.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard the chief executive of the benefits agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 15 June 1993.

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many *(a)* new disability living allowance claims and *(b)* top-up claims have been refused, broken down by the reasons for refusal, in each month since February 1992 at each disability benefit centre and for the country as a whole.

Firstly, it may be helpful for me to say at this stage that new Disability Living Allowance (DLA) claims are dealt with by the regional Disability Benefit Centres (DBCs) and top-up claims are dealt with by the Claims Conversion Unit (CCU).

Annex A shows a breakdown of the number of DLA claims that have been refused, and the reasons for refusal by DBC since February 1992.

A breakdown of refusals on top-up claims by DBC is not available. However, Annex B details the number of top-up claims that have been refused by the CCU, and the reasons for refusal.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

Annex A: Refusals on new claims for DLA by DBC
February 1992

	Medical grounds	Lay grounds (a)	(b)	(c)	Total
Edinburgh	5	0	32	0	37
Newcastle	57	0	35	0	92
Leeds	19	0	54	0	73
Manchester	10	0	32	0	42
Bootle	3	0	34	0	37
Birmingham	17	0	16	0	33
Bristol	7	0	26	0	33
Cardiff	11	0	13	0	24
Wembley	33	0	61	0	94
Sutton	21	0	56	0	77
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—
Dlau Warbreck House	1	0	3	0	4
Other MUs	—	—	—	—	—
Great Britain	184	0	362	0	546

March 1992

	Medical grounds	Lay grounds (a)	(b)	(c)	Total
Edinburgh	206	0	122	0	328
Newcastle	498	0	179	0	677
Leeds	282	0	334	0	616
Manchester	239	0	146	0	385
Bootle	129	0	141	0	270
Birmingham	194	0	1	0	195
Bristol	171	0	157	0	328
Cardiff	194	0	128	0	322
Wembley	263	1	374	0	638
Sutton	406	1	368	0	775
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—
Dlau Warbreck House	3	0	17	0	20
Other MUs	—	—	—	—	—
Great Britain	2,585	2	1,967	0	4,554

Annex A: Refusals on new claims for DLA by DBC
April 1992

	Medical grounds	Lay grounds (a)	(b)	(c)	Total
Edinburgh	412	0	87	0	499
Newcastle	1,263	1	134	0	1,398
Leeds	459	0	207	0	666
Manchester	715	0	138	0	853
Bootle	280	0	120	0	400
Birmingham	225	0	58	0	283
Bristol	330	0	141	0	471
Cardiff	254	0	86	0	340
Wembley	695	3	305	0	1,003
Sutton	628	0	237	0	865
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—
Dlau Warbreck House	8	0	5	0	13
Other MUs	—	—	—	—	—
Great Britain	5,269	4	1,518	0	6,791

May 1992

	Medical grounds	Lay grounds (a)	(b)	(c)	Total
Edinburgh	552	1	107	0	660
Newcastle	1,087	0	64	0	1,151
Leeds	631	0	156	0	787
Manchester	810	0	126	0	936

	Medical grounds	Lay grounds (a)	(b)	(c)	Total
Bootle	528	1	73	2	604
Birmingham	356	0	161	0	517
Bristol	340	0	143	2	485
Cardiff	641	0	110	2	753
Wembley	704	1	163	1	869
Sutton	404	2	149	0	555
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—
Dlau Warbreack House	3	0	9	1	13
Other MUs	—	—	—	—	—
Great Britain	6,056	5	1,261	8	7,330

Annex A: Refusals on new claims for DLA by DBC
June 1992

	Medical grounds	Lay grounds (a)	(b)	(c)	Total
Edinburgh	928	0	298	3	1,229
Newcastle	1,002	0	77	0	1,079
Leeds	1,661	2	159	2	1,824
Manchester	1,114	1	104	3	1,222
Bootle	657	0	130	0	787
Birmingham	978	1	201	0	1,180
Bristol	559	0	135	0	694
Cardiff	801	0	170	0	971
Wembley	895	3	180	0	1,078
Sutton	843	4	168	4	1,019
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—
Dlau Warbreck House	31	0	75	0	106
Other MUs	—	—	—	—	—
Great Britain	9,469	11	1,697	12	11,189

July 1992

	Medical grounds	Lay grounds (a)	(b)	(c)	Total
Edinburgh	1,979	2	253	5	2,239
Newcastle	1,450	1	67	1	1,519
Leeds	1,579	3	151	2	1,735
Manchester	1,864	2	93	3	1,962
Bootle	1,071	0	141	3	1,215
Birmingham	1,296	1	338	0	1,635
Bristol	872	0	81	1	954
Cardiff	1,345	0	129	1	1,475
Wembley	1,431	5	229	1	1,666
Sutton	2,333	11	192	14	2,550
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—
Dlau Warbreck House	105	0	91	1	197
Other MUs	—	—	—	—	—
Great Britain	15,235	25	1,765	32	17,147

Annex A: Refusals on new claims for DLA by DBC
August 1992

	Medical grounds	Lay grounds (a)	(b)	(c)	Total
Edinburgh	1,086	2	195	2	1,285
Newcastle	1,253	2	51	0	1,306
Leeds	1,864	6	117	1	1,988
Manchester	2,838	5	117	2	2,962
Bootle	1,567	0	111	1	1,679
Birmingham	1,423	3	305	2	1,733
Bristol	895	4	68	2	969
Cardiff	1,396	1	68	1	1,466
Wembley	1,449	5	194	4	1,652

	Medical grounds	Lay grounds (a)	(b)	(c)	Total
Sutton	1,717	17	141	4	1,879
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—
DLAU Warbreck House	180	1	76	3	260
Other MUs	—	—	—	—	—
Great Britain	15,668	46	1,443	22	17,179

September 1992

	Medical grounds	Lay grounds (a)	(b)	(c)	Total
Edinburgh	2,020	0	206	4	2,230
Newcastle	1,505	0	73	0	1,578
Leeds	2,123	6	146	5	2,280
Manchester	2,343	10	111	0	2,464
Bootle	1,774	3	95	1	1,873
Birmingham	2,918	3	265	6	3,192
Bristol	1,115	5	78	6	1,204
Cardiff	2,227	2	147	0	2,376
Wembley	1,964	11	242	8	2,225
Sutton	1,539	4	179	3	1,725
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—
DLAU Warbreck House	190	1	78	2	271
Other MUs	—	—	—	—	—
Great Britain	19,718	45	1,620	35	21,418

Annex A: Refusals on new claims for DLA by DBC
October 1992

	Medical grounds	Lay grounds (a)	(b)	(c)	Total
Edinburgh	4,316	3	193	6	4,518
Newcastle	1,194	2	58	1	1,255
Leeds	2,270	10	118	1	2,399
Manchester	2,051	5	90	3	2,149
Bootle	2,034	2	107	0	2,143
Birmingham	3,473	12	255	5	3,745
Bristol	1,102	4	83	5	1,194
Cardiff	1,423	4	116	2	1,545
Wembley	1,960	22	153	2	2,137
Sutton	1,578	4	164	8	1,754
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—
Dlau Warbreck House	520	2	97	4	623
Other MUs	—	—	—	—	—
Great Britain	21,921	70	1,434	37	23,462

November 1992

	Medical grounds	Lay grounds (a)	(b)	(c)	Total
Edinburgh	2,618	11	154	6	2,789
Newcastle	1,239	2	67	1	1,309
Leeds	1,781	4	107	1	1,893
Manchester	1,780	4	102	1	1,887
Bootle	1,287	2	119	4	1,412
Birmingham	2,412	8	224	4	2,648
Bristol	549	4	100	0	653
Cardiff	969	1	63	0	1,033
Wembley	1,395	16	140	3	1,554
Sutton	1,216	5	145	5	1,373
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—
Dlau Warbreck House	394	1	63	3	461
Other MUs	—	—	—	—	—

	Medical grounds	Lay grounds (a)	(b)	(c)	Total
Great Britain	15,642	58	1,284	28	17,012

Annex A: Refusals on new claims for DLA by DBC
December 1992

	Medical grounds	Lay grounds (a)	(b)	(c)	Total
Edinburgh	2,853	2	161	5	3,021
Newcastle	786	0	33	0	819
Leeds	1,870	6	88	2	1,966
Manchester	1,121	8	70	2	1,201
Bootle	1,048	5	79	0	1,132
Birmingham	2,149	18	167	8	2,342
Bristol	666	5	43	0	714
Cardiff	1,009	2	70	0	1,081
Wembley	1,083	8	87	3	1,181
Sutton	1,165	5	105	2	1,277
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—
DLAU Warbeck House	535	3	45	2	585
Other MUs	—	—	—	—	—
Great Britain	14,285	62	984	24	15,319

January 1993

	Medical grounds	Lay grounds (a)	(b)	(c)	Total
Edinburgh	1,932	2	104	3	2,041
Newcastle	862	2	50	1	915
Leeds	2,272	8	87	0	2,367
Manchester	1,582	9	115	0	1,706
Bootle	1,425	1	98	0	1,524
Birmingham	1,883	10	145	4	2,042
Bristol	650	6	56	0	712
Cardiff	1,229	0	96	0	1,325
Wembley	1,223	6	261	0	1,490
Sutton	1,196	8	127	5	1,336
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—
DLAU Warbeck House	943	4	99	8	1,054
Other MUs	—	—	—	—	—
Great Britain	15,197	56	1,238	21	16,512

Annex A: Refusals on new claims for DLA by DBC
February 1993

	Medical grounds	Lay grounds (a)	(b)	(c)	Total
Edinburgh	1,010	6	78	4	1,098
Newcastle	851	0	62	0	913
Leeds	2,419	7	195	2	2,623
Manchester	1,624	10	96	0	1,730
Bootle	1,569	1	139	2	1,711
Birmingham	1,937	7	312	2	2,258
Bristol	841	10	51	3	905
Cardiff	1,109	2	94	2	1,207
Wembley	1,564	8	138	0	1,710
Sutton	1,410	7	117	6	1,540
Glasgow	1,093	0	56	1	1,150
DLAU Warbreck House	2,379	23	464	5	2,871
Other MUs	3	0	0	0	3
Great Britain	17,809	81	1,802	27	19,719

March 1993

	Medical grounds	Lay grounds (a)	(b)	(c)	Total
Edinburgh	1,042	5	89	5	1,141
Newcastle	974	2	51	1	1,028
Leeds	2,707	8	172	5	2,892
Manchester	1,893	14	89	1	1,997
Bootle	1,799	5	148	1	1,953
Birmingham	2,467	10	266	3	2,746
Bristol	1,030	2	67	2	1,101
Cardiff	1,775	2	90	3	1,870
Wembley	2,078	16	209	1	2,304
Sutton	1,454	7	185	3	1,649
Glasgow	1,827	2	86	0	1,915
DLAU Warbreck House	1,080	13	257	8	1,358
Other MUs	13	0	0	0	13
Great Britain	20,139	86	1,709	33	21,967

Annex A: Refusals on new claims for DLA by DBC
April 1993

	Medical grounds	Lay grounds (a)	(b)	(c)	Total
Edinburgh	1,015	2	68	1	1,086
Newcastle	940	0	64	0	1,004
Leeds	2,375	6	131	1	2,513
Manchester	1,519	7	85	2	1,613
Bootle	1,728	1	115	1	1,845
Birmingham	2,546	14	216	2	2,778
Bristol	882	1	63	1	947
Cardiff	1,298	0	76	2	1,376
Wembley	1,601	17	170	3	1,791
Sutton	1,617	7	142	3	1,769
Glasgow	1,623	0	61	0	1,684
Dlau Warbreck House	274	13	92	4	383
Other MUs	9	0	0	0	9
Great Britain	17,427	68	1,283	20	18,798

May 1993

	Medical grounds	Lay grounds (a)	(b)	(c)	Total
Edinburgh	868	0	52	1	921
Newcastle	960	1	59	2	1,022
Leeds	2,228	3	115	2	2,348
Manchester	1,414	4	63	1	1,482
Bootle	1,453	2	71	0	1,526
Birmingham	2,003	3	182	4	2,192
Bristol	729	4	67	1	801
Cardiff	2,136	1	98	1	2,236
Wembley	1,529	15	147	2	1,693
Sutton	1,758	5	127	3	1,893
Glasgow	1,990	0	63	0	2,053
Dlau Warbreck House	103	1	42	0	146
Other MUs	11	0	0	0	11
Great Britain	17,182	39	1,086	17	18,324

Annex A: Other refusals during 1992[1]

	Medical grounds	Lay grounds (a)	(b)	(c)	Total
Edinburgh	1,021	3	46	2	1,072
Newcastle	746	1	23	0	770
Leeds	918	5	44	0	967
Manchester	973	4	30	0	1,007
Bootle	675	1	30	1	707
Birmingham	971	5	51	1	1,028

	Medical grounds	Lay grounds (a)	(b)	(c)	Total
Bristol	441	3	28	1	473
Cardiff	668	1	29	0	698
Wembley	806	11	57	2	876
Sutton	791	8	50	3	852
Glasgow	—	—	—	—	—
Dlau Warbreck House	112	4	13	4	133
Other MUs	—	—	—	—	—
Great Britain	8,122	46	401	14	8,583

[1] These cases were decided in 1992 but the exact month is not known.
(Figures are for cases cleared by a scan of the database during December 1992.)

Annex A: Cumulative up to end of May 1993

	Medical grounds	Lay grounds (a)	(b)	(c)	Total
Edinburgh	23,863	39	2,245	47	26,194
Newcastle	16,667	14	1,147	7	17,835
Leeds	27,458	74	2,381	24	29,937
Manchester	23,890	83	1,607	18	25,598
Bootle	19,027	24	1,751	16	20,818
Birmingham	27,248	95	3,163	41	30,547
Bristol	11,179	48	1,387	24	12,638
Cardiff	18,485	16	1,583	14	20,098
Wembley	20,673	148	3,110	30	23,961
Sutton	20,078	95	2,652	63	22,888
Glasgow	6,533	2	266	1	6,802
Dlau Warbreck House	6,861	66	1,526	45	8,498
Other MUs	36	0	0	0	36
Great Britain	221,998	704	22,818	330	245,850

Reasons for refusal on lay grounds are:
(a)—on grounds of age.
(b)—on grounds of residence and presence.
(c)—other reasons.

Annex B: Refusals on top up claims for DLA for Great Britain

	MobA Beneficiaries		AA Beneficiaries			
				Lay Grounds		
Month	Medical Grounds	Lay Grounds	Medical Grounds	Age	Other	Total
1992						
February	11	0	4	0	0	15
March	106	0	62	8	0	176
April	478	0	100	1	0	579
May	1,240	3	211	1	2	1,457
June	2,597	19	393	1	7	3,017
July	3,882	22	523	4	4	4,435
August	5,896	5	736	18	2	6,657
September	5,690	7	713	1	2	6,413
October	4,441	18	905	9	10	5,383
November	2,592	8	578	1	2	3,181
December	2,269	7	356	4	2	2,638
Others[1]	1,813	5	481	82	3	2,384
1993						
January	1,907	6	446	58	0	2,417
February	2,073	18	425	35	1	2,552
March	2,215	27	480	19	4	2,745
April	1,869	25	581	25	5	2,505
May	1,055	0	315	14	1	1,385
TOTAL	40,134	170	7,309	281	45	47,939

[1]These cases were decided in 1992 but the exact month is not known.
Figures are for cases cleared by a scan of the database during December 1992.

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) whether the Benefits Agency has now completed its report on the differences in adjudication standards between disability benefit centres;

(2) what steps the Benefits Agency has taken to ensure consistency in adjudication decisions on disability living allowance between disability benefits centres.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to my hon. Friend and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Sir John Hannam, dated 15 June 1993.

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking (i) whether the Benefits Agency has now completed its report on the differences in adjudication standards between Disability Benefits Centres and (ii) what steps the Benefits Agency has taken to ensure consistency in adjudication decisions on Disability Living Allowance between Disability Benefits Centres.

A study concerning standards of adjudication in Disability Benefits Centres is still in progress and findings are not expected to become available until late August 1993. Thereafter, recommendations will be carefully analysed before any changes are implemented.

The aim of the study is to assess standards of adjudication, including variations, across the Disability Benefits Centres and the main Disability Living Allowance Unit(s) at Blackpool. It includes a physical examination of casework, research among staff and an analysis of data arising from Review and Appeals activities.

I hope that you find this reply helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

National Insurance

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has as to how many people below the basic rate income tax threshold will pay more national insurance contributions during the 1994-95 financial year as a result of the changes announced in the Budget.

Mr. Hague *[pursuant to his reply, 7 June 1993, column 140]:* The following information was incorrect:

"It is estimated that in 1994-95 about ¼ million people whose earnings fall below the basic rate income tax threshold will pay slightly more in national insurance contributions."

The correct information is as follows:

It is estimated that in 1994-95 about 2¼ million people whose earnings fall below the threshold for basic rate income tax of 25 per cent. will pay slightly more in national insurance contributions.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Human Rights

16. **Dr. Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will support proposals for an international human rights tribunal.

Mr. Hurd: The world conference on human rights will review the range of international mechanisms for the protection of human rights. We understand that there may be a proposal for an international human rights tribunal. We will give careful consideration to this, and to all other matters before the conference.

Israel

17. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what indications he has received from Arab countries about their willingness to call off the Arab trade boycott of Israel.

Mr. Hurd: The response by Arab countries to numerous approaches on this subject—including an EC demarche—has been uneven. There has been no collective formal response. But there is evidence that some relaxations have been made and the Kuwait Government have this month signalled their intention to discontinue the application of the boycott to third countries. We shall continue to press Arab Governments on this.

25. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to meet the Israeli Foreign Minister to discuss matters pertaining to the peace process.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no immediate plans to meet the Israeli Foreign Minister.

Hong Kong

18. **Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to meet the Governor of Hong Kong to discuss relations with China.

Mr. Goodlad: We keep in the closest touch with the governor of Hong Kong about our discussions with the Chinese authorities on Hong Kong. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and I will next meet the governor when he comes to London on 30 of June for one of his regular visits for consultations. As is customary, the governor will also have discussions with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister as well as other Ministers and senior officials.

South Africa

19. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made towards the holding of multiracial elections in South Africa.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Negotiating Council has agreed on an election date of 27 April 1994, subject to ratification by the larger negotiating forum on 25 June.

29. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with parties involved in constitutional negotiations in South Africa.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs held useful talks with Nelson Mandela and Chief Buthelezi during their recent visits to London.

Pakistan

20. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received from the Pakistani authorities concerning the progress of the police investigations into the murder of Mohammed Afzal in Juarah village, Pakistan, on 4 October 1992.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The high commission in Islamabad has still not had a full report from the Pakistan authorities about the murder of Mohammed Afzal. It has, however, been told by the Pakistan police that the men accused of the murder have been declared "permanent absconders". The high commission will stay in close touch with the Pakistan authorities.

Angola

21. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps the Government have taken to put pressure on UNITA to abide by the terms of the Bicesse accord and the Angolan election results.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have actively supported United Nations efforts to secure a dialogue between UNITA and the Angolan Government leading to a ceasefire and full implementation of the Bicesse peace accords.

Mongolia

22. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what new proposals he has to improve relationships between the United Kingdom and Mongolia.

Mr. Goodlad: Relations with Mongolia are very good. January marked the 30th anniversary of the establishment of our diplomatic relations. Last year saw the introduction of a bilateral aid programme for Mongolia of £2·7 million over three years. This is aimed at helping the Mongolians with their economic reform programme, which is being carried out in the face of considerable hardship.

A bilateral cultural exchange programme, renewed on 11 June, will facilitate cultural and academic contacts and exchanges, English language teaching and joint research projects. Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal, accompanied by Commander Timothy Laurence, RN, will visit Mongolia from 11 to 14 July. A bilateral round table meeting is scheduled to take place in Britain this October.

Cambodia

23. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received about the political situation in Cambodia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: We welcome the successful holding of elections in Cambodia last month and congratulate UNTAC on its preparation and conduct. The result is a clear sign that the Cambodian people want to decide their own future. We are encouraging the successful parties to work together constructively to facilitate the emergence of a new Government after a constitution has been adopted.

34. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the situation in Cambodia following the elections.

Mr. Goodlad: The high turnout of the Cambodian electorate (89 per cent.) in the elections to the Constituent Assembly last month is a clear sign that the Cambodian people want to decide their own future. We are committed to recognising the results when they are certified as free and fair. Under the terms of the Paris agreements, the newly elected Constituent Assembly will draft and approve a new constitution before transforming itself into a legislative assembly which will form a new Cambodian Government. This is due to take place within three months. Meanwhile we are encouraging the successful parties to work together constructively to facilitate the emergence of a new Government.

Bosnia

24. **Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his proposals to secure an end to the conflict in Bosnia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Washington agreement of 22 May set out the immediate steps to be taken by the international community to effectively tackle the conflict in Bosnia. It is intended to help establish conditions for a lasting and equitable settlement, in accordance with the principles of the Vance-Owen peace plan, to the appalling conflict in Bosnia. Some of these steps have already been achieved, for example the adoption of United Nations Security Council resolutions on safe areas in Bosnia and the creation of a war crimes tribunal. Action continues within the United Nations and NATO to follow up other elements of the Washington agreement. Lord Owen and Mr. Stoltenberg are continuing their negotiations with great determination.

32. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is proposing to take to restore the territorial integrity of Bosnia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: United Nations Security Council resolution No. 836 reaffirms the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the responsibility of the Security Council in this regard. The principles of the Vance-Owen peace plan for Bosnia provide the framework for securing this.

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs by what means, following the Washington agreement, he envisages the implementation of the Vance-Owen plan for Bosnia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The principles contained within the Vance-Owen peace plan provide the framework for securing a political settlement to the conflict in Bosnia. The Washington agreement of 22 May established a series of immediate steps to alleviate the suffering on the ground while work continues to find a lasting and fair political settlement.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to President Izetbegovic in respect of Bosnian Muslim breaches in the ceasefires and the destruction of Croat villages by his forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Mr. Goodlad *[holding answer 14 June 1993]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs met Bosnian President Izetbegovic on 14 June. One of the issues that they discussed was the recent Bosnian-Muslim offensive in central Bosnia, particularly around Travnik. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State underlined our concern at reports of Muslim brutality and ethnic cleansing of Bosnian Croats,

and urged President Izetbegovic to order an end to this offensive and begin implementation of the Vance-Owen peace plan.

Global Security

26. **Mr. Gapes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to visit the United Nations to discuss global security.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs expects to visit the United Nations to attend the United Nations General Assembly general debate in September. No dates have yet been fixed.

Exports Promotion

28. **Mr. Congdon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will detail measures his Department takes to promote United Kingdom exports overseas.

Mr. Goodlad: It is a key objective of the Department to promote United Kingdom exports. Seventeen per cent. of frontline diplomatic staff and 48 per cent. of senior locally engaged staff working in 196 missions overseas are employed full-time on this task. In total, nearly a quarter of frontline diplomatic staff time (calculated on the basis of regular returns from posts) is expended on commercial work.

Middle East

30. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made towards peace in the middle east.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Another round of bilateral negotiations between the parties is beginning in Washington this week. There were encouraging signs at the end of the last round in May that the Israelis and Palestinians were beginning to address in detail issues of substance. We continue to urge on all parties the urgent need for further progress.

Social Chapter

31. **Ms Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with his EC counterparts about the social chapter of the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The social chapter has not featured in recent discussions with other member states.

Iraq

33. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he intends to review the policy of imposing sanctions on Iraq.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Security Council reviewed the sanctions in force against Iraq on 24 May. The Council concluded that Iraq had not complied with United Nations resolutions, and that there was therefore no justification for change.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Austin Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate he has made of the impact of sanctions against Serbia on other countries of the former Yugoslavia and neighbouring countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: United Nations sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro place a significant economic burden on neighbouring states. The recent visits of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to Bulgaria, Macedonia and Romania enabled him to discuss this issue with the Governments of those most acutely affected. The international financial institutions are best placed to assess the needs of those affected and provide appropriate support to help these countries develop a suitable policy response.

Iran

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response Her Majesty's Government have made to the proposal put to foreign Ministers of the European Community member states by the United States Secretary of State on 9 June relating to trade and export restrictions on Iran.

Mr. Goodlad: We shall be considering carefully the issues discussed by the EC and United States foreign Ministers with our EC partners. We shall continue to support international efforts to promote a harmonised approach to effective controls on the export of dual use goods to countries of particular concern, including Iran.

Kurdistan

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Turkish Government to cease all military operations in Kurdistan and accept the Kurdish PKK's unilateral ceasefire, and work towards a political solution.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the then Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), to the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) on 28 April at column *440*.

We regret the PKK's decision to end the ceasefire, and condemn the recent upsurge of violence in south-east Turkey. We frequently make clear to the Turkish Government the importance we attach to combating terrorism within a legal framework and with full respect for human rights.

Captain John Bashforth

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Indonesian authorities regarding the murder by pirates of Captain John Bashforth; and with what result.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs raised the

death of Captain Bashforth with the Indonesian authorities when he visited Indonesia at the beginning of April. Also Her Majesty's Embassy in Jakarta has been in frequent touch with the Indonesian authorities. Since April they have obtained further evidence from the Indonesian authorities which we have passed to the coroner in Buxted for the inquest on 21 June.

Kashmir

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the human rights committee of the European Parliament on the issue of Kashmir; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: None. However, together with our European Community partners, we have emphasised to the Indian Government the importance of respecting human rights in Kashmir.

Eritrea

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy towards the new independent state of Eritrea.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We recognised Eritrea as an independent sovereign state on 14 May. We have had a warm relationship with the former provisional Government, now the Government of Eritrea, and have proposed entering into diplomatic relations. We have committed £12 million of humanitarian aid since January 1992 and also run a modest bilateral aid programme.

Royal Family

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 7 June, *Official Report*, column *82-83*, what was the cost to his Department of each of the visits by the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh; and what were the sums involved in categories of expenditure within the cost of each visit.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 14 June 1993]:* The costs to date to the Department of the overseas visits undertaken by the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh during the financial year 1992-93 at the request of Government Departments are as follows:

Country	*Date*	*£*
France	12 May	nil
Malta	27 to 31 May	26,900
France	9 to 12 June	47,600
United States of America	13 to 14 July	nil
Germany	19 to 23 October	82,700
Dominica, Montserrat, Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands	11 to 20 March	nil

It is not possible to provide details of each category of expenditure without disproportionate cost.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 7 June, *Official Report*, columns *82-83*, if he will list the official engagements undertaken on each visit by *(a)* Princess Alexandra, *(b)* the Duke of Kent, *(c)* the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester and *(d)* Princess Margaret.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 14 June 1993]:* The main official engagements undertaken during these visits were as follows:

a. *Princess Alexandra*

USA

60th anniversary celebrations of Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington.
Reception to honour cooperation between UK and US armed forces.
Columbia lighthouse for the blind.
Corcoran gallery of art.

Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada

Red Cross headquarters
Centre for physically handicapped children.
Fort King George and fine arts centre.
Newlo children's rehabilitation centre.
Workshop for the blind.

b. *The Duke of Kent*

Japan

Priority Japan campaign—export promotions visits in Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya including visits to department stores, meetings with local government, tour of airport, visits to factories, visit to exhibition, meetings with senior businessmen and British Chamber of Commerce, visit to research laboratories and meetings with politicians and members of Japanese Royal family.

Italy

Columbus 1992 ships and the sea exhibition.
Genoa metro project.

Germany

Munich Electronica Trade Fair.

c. *The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester*

Belgium

British Chamber of Commerce in Belgium.
1992 Britain in Brussels festival:
—Industrial design exhibition;
—Scottish silver exhibition.

d. *The Princess Margaret*

Netherlands

International garden festival, Zoetermeer Het Loo (Palace).

DEFENCE

Defamation Cases

Mr. Garnier: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by number and title the actions for defamation brought by or against serving members of Her Majesty's armed forces in each year since 1989 in which the Department has provided all or a contribution to one or both sides' legal costs and damages; and at what total cost in each case.

Mr. Hanley: Since 1989 there has been only one such case. It involved the legal costs of a junior NCO who was the subject of an action for defamation arising from a

report he made to the military police about alleged assaults on him by another soldier. The full costs of the case are not yet known.

Hercules

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the route flown at low level by Hercules XV193 on 27 May was a standard route established for use by RAF Hercules.

Mr. Hanley: The Hercules fleet do not fly fixed or standard low-flying routes.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) by what means are potential fixed low-flying routes for training of RAF Hercules aircrew surveyed prior to adoption;

(2) how many fixed low-flying routes in the United Kingdom are currently in use by the RAF Hercules fleet; and what is the established periodicity for reviewing and changing any such fixed low-flying routes.

Mr. Hanley: The RAF Hercules do not fly fixed low-flying routes.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many bird strikes have occurred to RAF Hercules aircraft in each year since 1980; and how many were in each of the damage categories 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

Birdstrikes to RAF Hercules 1980 to 1992

Category	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
1 and 2	32	47	37	53	51	60	50	67	61	33	36	37	46
3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	32	47	37	53	51	61	50	67	61	33	36	38	46

Note: Breakdown of damage in categories 1 and 2 is not available.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the minimum authorised altitude for the low-level training sortie undertaken by Hercules XV193 on 27 May.

Mr. Hanley: It was 250 ft.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the minimum flying experience required from an RAF Hercules captain to fly the aircraft at *(a)* 500 ft minimum separation distance, *(b)* 250 ft minimum separation distance and *(c)* 100 ft minimum separation distance.

Mr. Hanley: After at least six months service on operational Hercules squadrons, crews are trained, in preparation for specific operational commitments, to fly aircraft at 500 ft minimum separation distance (MSD); the training requires four sorties, totalling 12 flying hours. Subsequently, after six months service on tactical support squadrons, crews are selected for training to fly at 250 ft MSD; the training comprises 20 sorties, totalling 41 flying hours. Approximately six months after qualifying to fly at 250 ft MSD crews undergo a further course of five sorties lasting 12 hours in total. Of these crews, a very small number of specifically selected crews are permitted to fly below 250 ft MSD.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the areas in which RAF Hercules are authorised to fly at less than 250 ft.

Mr. Hanley: Fixed-wing flying below 250 ft in the United Kingdom low flying system is restricted to three sparsely populated areas in northern Scotland, central Wales and the Borders which are designated as tactical training areas.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further precautionary measures have been adopted in the operation of the RAF Hercules fleet since 27 May.

Mr. Hanley: There is no reason to doubt the validity and safety of current operating procedures and thus no further precautionary measures have been adopted.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the maximum bank angle permitted for turns by RAF Hercules flying at *(a)* 500 ft minimum separation distance, *(b)* 250 ft minimum separation distance and *(c)* 100 ft minimum separation distance.

Mr. Hanley: The maximum permitted bank angle for RAF Hercules flying is 60 deg subject to the aircraft maintaining its authorised minimum separation distance.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many RAF Hercules sorties at less than 250 ft were authorised in each year since 1980.

Mr. Hanley: The numbers of movements authorised into the tactical training areas for flying below 250 ft by Hercules aircraft are as follows:

	Number
1980	1
1981	2
1982	10
1983	17
1984	28
1985	0
1986	15
1987	13
1988	7
1989	9
1990	28
1991	16
1992	9
[1]1993	4

[1] To 30 April.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the route flown at low level by Hercules XV193 on 27 May was also flown by the other aircraft in the formation.

Mr. Hanley: On 27 May Hercules XV193 flew the first part of the low-level element of its route in formation with other aircraft. As planned, the aircraft then broke formation to fly different routes for the final stage of the sortie.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the design bird strike impact strength of the windscreen of the RAF Hercules; and what measures have been introduced to increase the protection of Hercules aircrew against bird strikes since the aircraft's entry in service.

Mr. Hanley: Information on the design bird strike impact strength is not available within my Department. In 26 years of service in the RAF no Hercules crew member or passenger has been injured a a result of bird strikes. As a result no measures to increase the crew's protection have been introduced since the aircraft entered service.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* sorties and *(b)* flying hours are devoted to low-level flying training in the training syllabus of No. 242 Operational Conversion Unit and in the continuation training programmes of operational Hercules squadrons.

Mr. Hanley: No. 242 Operational Conversion Unit is now 57 (Reserve) Squadron. After six months' service on tactical support squadrons, crews are selected for a five-week low-level flying course comprising 20 sorties and totalling 41 flying hours. Approximately six months after initial qualification crews undergo a further five-day low-flying course comprising five sorties and 12 flying hours.

Explosive devices

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many bombs have been removed or rendered harmless on the coast of England and Wales by the Royal Navy in 1992.

Mr. Hanley: A total of 19 bombs, some of which dated back to the second world war and earlier, were recovered from the coast of England and Wales by the Royal Navy in 1992.

Royal Clarence Yard, Gosport

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will take steps to ensure that the gate of the Royal Clarence yard at Gosport is maintained in a state appropriate for its historical importance.

Mr. Hanley: The gate to Royal Clarence yard is being examined by consultants to determine what renovation work might be required.

Horse Guards Parade

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of the Life Guards and Blues and Royals attending the Horse Guards parade ceremony on Thursday 27 May; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Guidelines covering the presentation of new standards, guidons and colours to regiments of the Army are contained in The Queens Regulations for the Army 1975. It is customary that the Sovereign personally presents new standards or colours to the regiments of the Household Divisions in the case of the Household Cavalry on Horse Guards Parade. The men, horses and armoured cars participating in the ceremony on 27 May did so at no extra cost to the defence budget. The cost of transportation of troops to the ceremony was approximately £3,000.

Shells (Uranium)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence at which sites his Department has tested armour-piercing shells tipped with depleted uranium.

Mr. Aitken: Since the programme was first authorised and announced to the House, *Official Report*, 8 March 1979, cols. *777-78* and 25 January 1980, col *395*, all United Kingdom depleted uranium firings, with the exception of a few small calibre rounds trialled at West Freugh in the late 1980s, have taken place at the Eskmeals and Kirkcudbright ranges. My Department has also test-fired DU armour-piercing shells at White Sands, New Mexico and Aberdeen proving ground, Maryland in the United States of America and at Gramat in France.

Science and Technology

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will designate one of his Ministers to be responsible for his Department's contribution to the Government's science and technology "Forward Look."

Mr. Aitken: Paragraph 2.37 of the White Paper "Realising Our Potential—A Strategy for Science, Engineering and Technology" describes the preparation of the "Forward Look" by the Office of Science and Technology, and the participation of Government Departments through the existing, well-established machinery of the official and ministerial Cabinet Committees on Science and Technology.

Near-Market Research

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what his Department's policy is with regard to the funding of near-market research.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Member to paragraphs 2.20 to 2.22 of the White Paper "Realising Our Potential—A Strategy for Science, Engineering and Technology".

Belize

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration was given by his Ministry prior to the decision to withdraw British forces from Belize being taken, to basing Gurkha regiments being transferred from Hong Kong in Belize rather than the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hanley: We have no current plans to increase the number of Gurkha battalions stationed in the United Kingdom as a result of the rundown of the Hong Kong garrison. A Gurkha infantry battalion from Hong Kong will, however, be deployed to Belize on a six-month tour in October.

German Units (Repatriation)

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those units due to be repatriated from Germany as a result of "Options for Change" that have not yet been found facilities in which to be based in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hanley: Accommodation, in one case albeit only temporary, has been identified for all the units redeploying to the United Kingdom from Germany. In some cases the exact nature of unit and location has not yet been decided.

Lumsden Road Estate, Portsmouth

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the sale price of the Lumsden Road estate, Portsmouth, to European Developments; and what was the net total value of the bid submitted by Swaything Housing Society and Portsmouth Housing Association taking into account the value of nominal rights given back to the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Hanley: This information is commercial in confidence.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the reasons for his decision to dispose of the Lumsden Road site in Portsmouth to European Developments; and what precautions he has taken to ensure that the land is made safe for future use.

Mr. Hanley: The marketing of the Lumsden Road site involved the full disclosure of the site's history to all potential purchasers. The decision was taken to sell to European Developments because it submitted the highest compliant bid. It is now a matter for European Developments and Portsmouth city council to ensure that the site is suitable for the purpose for which it will be used.

"Options for Change"

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all the United Kingdom Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force bases that *(a)* have been made redundant and *(b)* are due to be made redundant as a result of "Options and Change".

Mr. Hanley: A list of the defence estate which has become, or could become, redundant as a consequence of the "Options for Change" is set out.

Alternative defence uses are sought in all cases where an activity ends at a defence establishment and this search continues until the site is disposed of. It does not necessarily follow, therefore, that all the sites listed will be disposed of.

RN Diesel Repair Depot Blackbrooke Farm
HMS St Vincent (Furse House)
Royal Navy Stores Depot Lathalmond
HMS Daedalus
Royal Navy Armaments Depot Trecwn
Oil Fuel Depot Invergordon
HMS Nelson Gunwharf
Royal Navy Stores Depot Exeter (Top Site)
HM Naval Base Portland
Royal Navy Hospital Stonehouse
Royal Navy Air Yard Wroughton
HMS Royal Arthur
Oil Fuel Depot Rosyth
Royal Navy Stores Depot Copenacre—Closure of all underground storage
Uniake Barracks, Harrogate
Richie Barracks, Kirknewton
Kings Barracks, Kirkcudbright
41 District Workshop Strensall
Royal Artillery Barracks Woolwich
Simpson Barracks Northampton
Old Park Barracks, Dover
Kitchener Barracks, Chatham
Oakington Barracks
Albermarle Barracks, Ouston
Queen Elizabeth Barracks Strensall
Sir John More Barracks Shorncliffe
Gamecock Barracks, Bramcote
Queen Elizabeth Barracks Guildford
RAF Hospital Ely
RAF Stanbridge
RAF Harrogate
RAF Swanton Morley
RAF Hullavington
RAF Swinderby
RAF West Raynham
RAF Church Fenton
RAF Brawdy
RAF Hospital Halton
RAF Hereford
Central Stores Depot Swanmore
Proof and Experimental Establishment Inchterf
Proof and Experimental Establishment Cold Meece

Land Sales

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in what circumstances, when disposing of publicly owned land, he will not accept the highest bid.

Mr. Hanley: When disposing of surplus property on the open market it is the Department's policy to accept the highest bid, provided that we are satisfied that the bidder is capable of honouring the conditions of the sale.

Directorate General of Defence Accounts

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what performance targets have been set for the Directorate General of Defence Accounts for 1993-94.

Mr. Hanley: Under the terms of the agency's framework document, a range of revised targets for 1993-94 has been set which will ensure continuing improvements in the quality of service that the agency provides to its customers, as well as reflecting the continuing need to secure economies in defence spending.

The targets for the period 1993-94 are:

a. to complete the Agency's planned workload, as agreed with our customers, within the funds allocated for this purpose and to cope with any unforeseen requirements in the year;

b. to maintain the Agency's quality of service as defined in the Service Level Agreements and secondary targets;

c. to seek further efficiencies in the use of resources to the advantage of the Agency and its customers, thereby making efficiency savings of at least 1·5 per cent. of the total cash budget (excluding those savings arising directly from centrally managed efficiency measures);

d. to compete for payroll work offered through the Government's Market Testing programme and to win all that is competed for;

e. to carry out a study into the incidence of cost in the Agency so that fixed costs and variable costs are clearly and separately identifiable, with the further aim of reducing fixed costs.

WALES

House Prices

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish figures showing *(a)* average house prices paid by all buyers, *(b)* percentage changes in cash prices in prices relative to the preceding year and *(c)* percentage changes in prices relative to the preceding year after allowing for the effects of retail price inflation in Wales in each year from 1979.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on average house prices for the years 1979 to 1991 is published in "Welsh Housing Statistics and Housing and Construction Statistics", copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Health Authorities (Administration)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for the most recent year that figures are available *(a)* the percentage of total revenue expenditure on health services that each health authority spent on headquarters' administration and *(b)* the actual expenditure that each health authority spent on headquarters' administration.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The amount that each health authority spent on headquarters administration in 1991-92 together with its percentage share of total revenue expenditure was as follows:

Health authority	*Expenditure on headquarters administration* £ *thousands*	*Expenditure on headquarters administration as a percentage of total revenue expenditure* *Per cent.*
Clwyd	2,581	1·6
East Dyfed	2,997	2·7
Gwent	1,557	0·9
Gwynedd	2,050	2·1
Mid Glamorgan	2,385	1·1
Pembrokeshire	478	1·1
Powys	1,955	3·4
South Glamorgan	6,542	3·1
West Glamorgan	2,036	1·3

Source: Summarised accounts of health authorities in Wales.
Notes:
(1) 1991-92 data is latest available.
(2) The figure for expenditure on headquarters administration is taken to be that covering authority administration and purchasing expenses.
(3) Excludes special health authorities (Welsh Health Common Services Authority and Health Promotion Authority for Wales) and family health services authorities which, by the nature of their functions, are not comparable with the above.

GP Practices

Mr. Duncan Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many single-handed general practitioner practices there are in Wales: and what is their average patient holding.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: At 1 October 1992 there were 126 single-handed general practitioner practices in Wales. The average list size for this type of practitioner was 2,015 as at 1 April 1992 (the latest date for which data are available).

Health Authorities and Trusts

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* health authorities and *(b)* trusts were in existence on 1 April; and what is his forecast of the number on 1 April 1994.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There were nine health authorities, eight family health service authorities and 14 NHS trusts in Wales on 1 April 1993. The creation of further trusts will depend on decisions due to be made later this year, following public consultation on formal applications submitted for NHS trust status from April 1994.

Unemployment

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he proposes to tackle unemployment in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Redwood: It is the job of Government to create the right conditions in which business might thrive, and a wide range of measures designed to create a self-sustaining market economy and thereby help unemployed people find work is already in place. Our strategy for growth is bearing fruit with four consecutive monthly falls in unemployment.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many acute beds have been lost in Wales since 1979, expressed by number and as a percentage;

(2) how many *(a)* hospital beds and *(b)* acute hospital beds there were in Wales in (i) 1979 and (ii) at the latest date for which figures are available; and what is (ii) as a percentage of (i);

(3) how many hospital beds have been closed since 1979.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is as follows:

Average daily beds in NHS hospitals

	1979	*1991-92*	*Change* *Number*	*Per cent.*
Acute beds[1]	10,133·3	8,834·7	−1,298·6	−12·8
All hospital beds	23,456·1	18,640·3	−4,815·8	−20·5
Acute beds as a percentage of all beds	43·2	47·4	—	—
Inpatient cases treated	349,695	500,336	150,641	43·1

[1] Excludes geriatric, maternity, mental handicap and mental illness beds.

Adoption and Fostering

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he is taking to encourage more people to become foster parents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Guidance has been given to local social services authorities on recruitment of foster parents at paragraphs 3.7-3.11 of volume 3, "Family Placements", in "The Children Act Guidance and Regulations" series (HMSO). A copy is in the Library of the House.

Grant is given to the Wales Centre of the British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering Organisation, one of whose activities is to run an annual "Find a Family" campaign in co-operation with local social services authorities.

Mr. Richards To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many children have been *(a)* adopted and *(b)* fostered in each year and in each county in Wales since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The total number of adoption orders made each year in England and Wales since 1979 is published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in its series FM2 "Marriage and Divorce Statistics" (HMSO). A copy is in the Library of the House.

The following tables show the numbers of children entering fostering arrangements by county in Wales since 1979.

1. Number of children placed under private foster arrangements in Wales[1]

	Clwyd	*Dyfed*	*Gwent*	*Gwynedd*	*Mid Glam*	*Powys*	*South Glam*	*West Glam*	*Wales*
1979	21	14	3	2	22	2	30	—	94
1980	28	10	3	4	17	29	40	1	132
1981	24	4	3	7	19	26	17	3	103
1982	9	4	12	6	17	4	12	3	67
1983	15	6	13	5	21	4	14	1	79
1984	7	6	6	5	17	2	18	2	63
1985	8	6	9	2	13	1	15	1	55
1986	15	6	6	6	16	1	17	—	67
1987	12	11	8	9	13	—	16	—	69
1988	16	4	11	14	—	1	16	—	62
1989	18	12	6	6	1	2	11	—	56
1990	15	6	8	5	—	6	6	—	46
1991	15	8	5	7	1	3	4	—	43

[1] At 31 March each year.
Data for 1979 and 1980 relates to children in foster homes supervised under the Children Act 1958.
Data for 1981 onwards relates to private fostering arrangements supervised under the Foster Children Act 1980.

2. Number of children in local authority foster care in Wales[1]

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Clwyd	245	269	258	245	229	219	200	227	227	224	207	220	210
Dyfed	143	146	139	155	130	134	128	128	134	151	172	175	214
Gwent	292	288	278	301	308	297	291	302	307	325	323	377	341
Gwynedd	134	134	141	166	176	179	176	181	173	173	178	162	155
Powys	271	310	347	372	355	363	377	389	393	386	377	423	378
Mid Glamorgan	33	33	41	50	54	44	29	30	35	35	46	36	33
South Glamorgan	288	307	299	306	292	303	330	354	341	352	301	306	316
West Glamorgan	213	222	221	228	255	258	266	280	295	326	293	295	303
Wales	1,619	1,709	1,724	1,823	1,799	1,797	1,797	1,891	1,905	1,972	1,897	1,994	1,950

[1] At 31 March each year.

Cardiac Centre

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to announce the establishment of a second cardiac centre in south Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The option appraisal dealing with cardiac services in south Wales has been completed and an announcement will be made very shortly.

Timber

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much board feet of timber has been harvested from Welsh forests in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The volumes of timber harvested from Welsh forests since 1979 are shown in the following table, in thousands of cubic metres. The quantity of sawn wood produced from this timber would depend on the end-use and the efficiency of the conversion process, but each cubic metre is likely to produce about 220 board feet of sawnwood.

Year	*Volume ('000 m^3)*
1979	560
1980	630
1981	680
1982	730
1983	760
1984	780
1985	840
1986	930
1987	960
1988	905
1989	925
1990	920
1991	975
1992	1,020

Spine Cancer

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in Wales died from cancer of the spine in each year since 1987.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The number of deaths to residents of Wales where the underlying cause was cancer of the spine is not available separately. However, the number of deaths where the underlying cause was cancer of the vertebral column (main part of the spine), excluding sacrum and coccyx and the number of deaths where the

underlying cause was cancer of the pelvis and the lower part of the spine (pelvic bones, sacrum and coccyx) are given in the following table:

Residents of Wales

	Main part of spine[1]	*Lower part of spine and pelvis*[2]
1987	4	4
1988	1	2
1989	1	3
1990	2	3
1991	2	3
1992	0	2

[1] 170.2.
[2] 170.6.
Source:
Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.
International Classification of Diseases (9th revision).

Mature Students

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many mature students entered into full-time or part-time education in Wales for each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The numbers of mature students who commenced full or part-time courses at maintained and grant-aided further and higher education colleges in Wales and at the University of Wales each year since 1981 are shown in the following table. Comprehensive information for earlier years is not available.

Mature students[1] *entered first year of course*[2]

Year[3]	*Full-time*[4]	*Part-time*[5]
1981	5,500	16,400
1982	5,400	16,900
1983	5,200	19,600
1984	5,200	19,700
1985	5,500	21,100
1986	5,800	24,000
1987	5,800	26,700
1988	5,900	30,300
1989	6,900	35,500
1990	7,900	37,400
1991	10,600	40,400
1992	not yet available	

[1] Students aged 21 or over at 31 August preceding the academic year except in the case of postgraduates where the age taken is 25 or over.
[2] All courses regardless of level and including those of a recreational nature.
[3] Student count at December for University of Wales, November for other colleges.
[4] Includes sandwich students.
[5] Includes part-time day, block release, evening only and open/distance learning.
Sources:
Further Education Student Record and Universities' Statistical Record.

Investment

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what work is currently undertaken by his Department to attract increased levels of investment into Wales by venture capital houses.

Mr. Redwood: Every encouragement is given to venture capital houses to increase their investment in Wales. Through the financial services initiative and other means, my Department and the WDA have regular contact with providers of finance and their representative bodies, and all possible support is given for them to take advantage of the excellent investment opportunities available in Wales.

Corporate Jets

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions his Department has had with potential bidders for Corporate Jets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: All such matters are commercial in confidence.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will visit the Corporate Jets factory, Broughton, Clwyd.

Mr. Redwood: I have no current plans to do so.

Central Heating Grants

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from Maplewood avenue in Alyn and Deeside about the introduction of grants for the installation of central heating.

Mr. Redwood: None.

South Llanelli

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what percentage of the total *(a)* receipts arising out of and *(b)* expenditure incurred on the development of south Llanelli has fallen to the Welsh Development Agency;

(2) what has been the total *(a)* expenditure incurred and *(b)* receipts by the Welsh Development Agency in respect of its joint venture with Llanelli borough council for the development of south Llanelli.

Mr. Redwood: A provisional figure for WDA expenditure in respect of the re-development of south Llanelli up to the beginning of May 1993 is £14·1 million. Income due to the WDA for the same period is around £188,000. I am not in a position to advise on the borough council's income and expenditure as it is a matter for the local authority.

Enterprise in Wales

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to designate 1994 as a year for enhancing enterprise in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: My policy is that every year is a year for enhancing enterprise in Wales.

In the last 10 years, the number of self-employed people in Wales has risen by over a third.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to develop a Welsh enterprise foundation; and what efforts are currently undertaken by his Department to encourage an enterprise culture within Wales.

Mr. Redwood: My Department works closely with a range of bodies including the WDA, DBRW TECs, local

enterprise agencies, colleges and schools to promote enterprise in Wales. I am considering the Institute of Welsh Affairs' report "Wales 2010" including its proposal that the institute should act as the catalyst in establishing a Welsh enterprise foundation.

Cancer

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cancer cases diagnosed among people living in Gwynedd were analysed by the various indentifiable categories of cancers for the latest available period; and if he will publish corresponding figures for five, 10, 15 and 20 years previously.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The latest available data on cancer registrations in Wales are for 1988 and are published at health authority level in table 9·03 of "Health and Personal Social Services Statistics for Wales, No 19, 1992". Reliable data on cancer registrations in Wales are available only from 1974. Data for Gwynedd for 1974 to 1983 are contained in table 2·8 of "Cancer Registration in Wales: 1974-84". Data for 1984 to 1986 are contained in table 1 of "Cancer Registration in Wales: 1984-86". Each of the above publications is available from the Library of the House.

Flu Vaccinations

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are being taken to encourage people in Wales to receive flu vaccinations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In September of each year the Chief Medical Officer reminds all doctors of those groups of patients for whom immunisation against influenza is recommended. Further details are given in the 1992 edition of the Memorandum "Immunisation Against Infectious Disease" which is issued to all doctors in Wales. Posters are also issued to family health services authorities and health authorities for display in surgeries and other relevant patient areas.

Solvent Abuse

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are being taken to tackle the problem of solvent abuse in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Initiatives in Wales to combat drug misuse, including solvent abuse, are undertaken locally by the health authorities and county councils. Nationally the Health Departments' anti-solvent campaign launched in February 1992 is still providing material to support the local campaigns.

The prevention working group of the advisory council for the Misuse of Drugs is currently examining the whole area of volatile substance abuse and hopes to make recommendations during the course of next year.

Tourism

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many recognised visitor attractions there are in Wales; and how many of them are located in Clwyd.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Wales tourist board knows of 421 tourist attractions in the Principality of which 53 are located in Clwyd. However there is no requirement for visitor attractions to be formally recognised.

Research and Development

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what steps he is taking to improve the take up of grants and other incentives for research and development by small and medium enterprises;

(2) what steps he is taking to improve the ease of access to innovation support programmes by small and medium sized enterprises.

Mr. Redwood: The Welsh Office carries out a range of promotional activities, working with other bodies including the training and enterprise councils, the Welsh development agency, the Design Council and the Development Board for Rural Wales, to encourage small and medium sized companies in Wales to take advantage of the support available for research and development both from the United Kingdom Government and the European Commission.

The climate for innovation and take-up of grants for research and development are encouraged through the work of local initiatives such as information technology Wales and the Welsh medical technology forum.

In addition my officials are now working closely with the Welsh relay centre which will play a central role in ensuring the results emanating from the EC's framework research and development programme are used effectively, particularly by small and medium enterprises.

In order to build effectively on these and other initiatives to encourage innovation, we are consulting on how best to improve access to and delivery of business services in Wales.

Forward Look

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will designate one of his Ministers to be responsible for his Department's contribution to the Government's science and technology Forward Look.

Mr. Redwood: Paragraph 2.37 of the recent White Paper "Realising Our Potential—A Strategy for Science, Engineering and Technology" describes the preparation of the Forward Look by the Office of Science and Technology, and the participation of Government Departments through the existing, well-established machinery of the official and ministerial Cabinet Committees on Science and Technology.

Near-market Research

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what his Department's policy is with regard to the funding of near-market research.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Gentleman to paragraphs 2.20 to 2.22 of the White Paper "Realising Our Potential—A Strategy for Science, Engineering, and Technology".

Incomes

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women aged over 16 years have an income of less than £75 per week.

Mr. Redwood: Estimates from the "New Earnings Survey" and "Employees in Employment" at April 1992

are that, in Wales, 1,500 full-time male and 2,000 full-time female employees on adult rates had gross weekly earnings below £75 per week. Comprehensive information for part-time employees is not available.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in Wales aged over 16 years who work *(a)* part-time and *(b)* full-time have an income of less than £75 per week.

Mr. Redwood: It is estimated from the "New Earnings Survey" and "Employees in Employment" at April 1992 that, in Wales, 3,500 full-time employees on adult rates had gross weekly earnings below £75. Comprehensive information for part-time employees is not available.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Viral Haemorrhagic Disease

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases of viral haemorrhagic disease there were in each year since 1985.

Mr. Soames: Since 1985 there have been four recorded cases of viral haemorrhagic disease of rabbits in Great Britain, all of which occurred in 1992.

Agriculture and Food Research Council

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps she is taking to draw up a concordat of co-operation between her Department and the Agriculture and Food Research Council.

Mr. Jack: As the recent White Paper "Realising Our Potential—A Strategy for Science, Engineering and Technology" makes clear, a new system of research councils will come into effect on 1 April 1994. The Government have proposed that each of these new research councils should work with the Government Departments with which they have a significant policy connection to draw up and publish concordats.

Near-market Research

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what her Department's policy is with regard to the funding of near-market research.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to paragraphs 2.20 to 2.22 of the White Paper "Realising our Potential—A Strategy for Science, Engineering and Technology".

Science and Technology

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether she will designate one of her Ministers to be responsible for her Department's contribution to the Government's science and technology Forward Look.

Mr. Jack: Paragraph 2.37 of the recent White Paper "Realising Our Potential—A Strategy for Science, Engineering and Technology" describes the preparation of the Foward Look by the Office of Science and Technology, and the participation of Government Departments through the existing, well-established machinery of the official and ministerial Cabinet Committees on Science and Technology.

Benomyl and Cardendazim

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what formulations related to Benomyl or Cardendazim have been withdrawn from the market over the last 12 years.

Mr. Soames: Formulations of pesticide products are commercially sensitive. However, two products containing benomyl and 53 products containing carbendazim have been withdrawn since 1981. The benomyl products were Benlate T and Polycote Pedigree 3.

Those containing carbendazim were Derosal 50 per cent. WP, Kombat, Delsene Flowable, Delsene 75, Midox Carbendazim, Battal WP, Bolda, CME 10288, Cosmic, Konker, Bavistin M, Bavistin WG, Mastiff, Corbel Duo, Cosmic FL B, Cosmic FL C, Fisons Garden Disease Spray, Focal Flowable (00910), Focal Flowable (03927), Septal, Septal Flowable, Focal WDG, Starlate, Carbate, Bio One-Shot for Diseases, Multi W, Multi W Flowable, Systemic Fungicide (carbendazim), Gammalex Liquid, Mystic Systemic Garden Fungicide, Mystic General Garden Insecticide/Fungicide, Chafer Carbendazim 511, Headland Suppress Plus, Tripart Defensor WP, Hispor 225L, Mantle 370 FW, Clifton Carbendazim, H115, DKB Tecnazene/Carbendazim Dust, Ashlade Carbonil, Ashlade M, Cosmic FL A, Ashlade Carbendazim Flowable, Ashlade Mancarb FL, Delsene M Flowable, Compo Carbendazim, Maximate, Sheen 362 SW, Arena Plus, Ashlade Mancarb Plus, Murphy Zap Cap Vegetable Care, 200 Plus and Bayfidan BM.

In all cases the products were withdrawn or approval allowed to lapse because of commercial considerations.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what labelling arrangements apply to the use of Benomyl-related products indicating whether precautions should be used by pregnant women.

Mr. Soames: All pesticide products, including those containing benomyl and related active ingredients, are approved on the advice of the independent advisory committee on pesticides, only if the Government are satisfied that they can be used without risk to the public —whether users, consumers of treated produce, or those in the vicinity of the spraying operations. Labelling arrangements are covered by the approvals process and labels of benomyl products include warning to keep off skin, to wash after use and, for the home garden product, to store away from children. They do not include specific precautions to be taken by pregnant women.

Clenbuterol

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 7 June, *Official Report*, column *30*, if she will make a statement on the abuse of clenbuterol outside Great Britain.

Mr. Soames: I am aware of reports from other member states which allege that clenbuterol is being used illegally for growth promotion purposes. Ministers spoke to their counterparts in the Irish and Belgian Governments about these reports at the time and received assurances that every effort was being made to stamp out the misuse of this substance. The authorities concerned can be confident of our full support in their efforts to this end.

Nevertheless surveillance for clenbuterol in imported meat has been increased this year as indicated in my right hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates) on 2 March 1993 at columns *78-9*.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the number of recorded incidents of clenbuterol abuse in each EC member state for each of the last three years.

Mr. Soames: In the United Kingdom over the past three years, 1,780 random samples taken under the national surveillance scheme from cattle, sheep and pigs have been analysed for the presence of clenbuterol. No positives have been found under this scheme for clenbuterol in Great Britain, but as indicated in my reply to the Member for Glandford and Scunthorpe on 7 June (*Official Report*, column 29-30), two clenbuterol positive samples were reported in 1992 from samples taken under the separate arrangements directed at retail and wholesale premises.

In Northern Ireland three positives were found in 1991 (two in 1992) under the national surveillance scheme random sampling arrangements. In addition under intensive meat sampling procedures which have operated in Northern Ireland since 1991, and which are capable of detecting residue traces up to 120 days after administration has ceased, 965 suspect animals were detained and tested in 1991 (1,482 in 1992) of which 68 were found positive (112 in 1992) involving 28 producers (32 in 1992) out of a total of 36,000 producer herds. All levels detected were below the maximum residue level and thus presented no risk to human health. Nevertheless all carcases were condemned as the drug was used in unlicensed form.

I regret that comparable information from other member states is not available from the EC Commission.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many incidents of clenbuterol abuse in meat imported into Britain from non-EC countries were recorded in each of the last three years.

Mr. Soames: Ongoing surveillance in Great Britain for clenbuterol in imported meat is carried out under a scheme, co-ordinated by the working party on veterinary residues in animal products, which is directed at retail and wholesale premises. All of the samples taken under the scheme since it was established in January 1990, from meat imported into Britain from non-EC countries and tested for the presence of clenbuterol, have proved to be negative.

Benlate DF

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what imports have taken place into the United Kingdom of Benlate DF over the last 12 years.

Mr. Soames: We have no record of any imports of Benlate DF.

Pesticides

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the names of those persons who sit on the Advisory Committee on Pesticides and their sponsoring or employing organisations.

Mr. Soames: The members of the advisory committee on pesticides and their sponsoring or employing organisations are as follows:

Chairman

Professor Sir Colin Berry:—DSc, MD, PhD, FRCPath, FFPM, Professor of Morbid Anatomy, Consultant in Histopathology and Director of the Pathological Institute at the Royal London Hospital.

Deputy Chairman

Professor Geoffrey Sagar:—CBE, BA, MA, DPhil(Oxon), Professor of Agricultural Botany and Vice Principal of the University College of North Wales.

Independent Members

Dr. Andree Carter:—BSc, MISoilSci, MIWEM, Principal Research Scientist and Laboratory Manager, Soil Survey and Land Research Centre, Cranfield Institute of Technology.

Professor Nicola Cherry:—BSc, MSc, MPhil, PhD, MD, Senior Lecturer, Centre for Occupational Health, University of Manchester.

Professor Anthony Dayan:—BSc(Hons), MD, FRCP, FRCPath, FFPM, FIBiol, Professor of the DH Toxicology Laboratory, St. Bartholomews Hospital Medical College, University of London.

Professor Gareth Jones:—BSc, MSc, PhD, DSc, MIBiol, FhS, Professor of Microbiology and Director of Research, Portsmouth University.

Mr. John Leahy:—MA, CChem, MRSC, General Manager of Severn Trent Laboratories.

Professor Donald Lee:—BSc, PhD, FIBiol, FRSA, Professor of Agricultural Zoology, University of Leeds.

Dr. Alexander Proudfoot:—BSc(Hons), MB, ChB, FRCPE, Consultant Physician, Edinburgh Royal Infirmary and Director of the Scottish Poisons Information Bureau.

Mr. Roger Tayler:—BSc(Agric), Postgrad Dip Agric (Reading), NDA, CBiol, MIBiol, Senior Tutor in the Faculty of Agriculture and Food and Senior Lecturer in Crop Production, Department of Agriculture, University of Reading.

Professor Paul Webster:—BSc, PhD, FBIM, FRSA, Head of Department, Department of Agricultural Economics, Wye College, University of London, Ashford, Kent.

Members are reminded at the start of every committee meeting of the necessity for them to disclose any interests they may have (personal or nonpersonal, specific or non-specific) or financial in any item under discussion. Members with interests may only participate in so far as the chairman will allow by way of answering questions.

THORP

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consideration he has given to the public responses received by 23 January in response to draft discharge authorisations for the BNFL thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield; and how many were *(a)* against and *(b)* in favour of granting such authorisation.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. Friend is currently considering a report on the representations received in response to consultation on draft radioactive discharge authorisations for BNFL Sellafield. 64,514 responses were against issuing the authorisations as drafted and 19,217 were in favour of granting them.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent discussions she has had with, and what representations she has received from, senior management at BNFL on draft authorisations for BNFL's thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: In dealing with this matter the Minister and the chief inspector of Her Majesty's inspectorate of

pollution act jointly under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 in regulating radioactive discharges from sites licensed under the Nuclear Installations Act 1965. They have therefore received detailed applications from BNFL for new radioactive discharge authorisations for Sellafield, including THORP. BNFL has since written to emphasise the commercial importance it attaches to reaching a decision on the draft discharge authorisations without undue delay.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the application from BNFL for authorisation for proposed new radioactive discharge limits from the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield fulfils the requirements of environmental assessment; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The information supplied by BNFL in support of its application for new radioactive discharge authorisations for Sellafield, including the thermal oxide reprocessing plant, has been sufficient for the purposes of the radiological assessments carried out by this Department.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 17 June 1993

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Probate Service

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, pursuant to his answer of 26 October, *Official Report*, columns *436-37*, if he will list the progress made in attaining improvements to the probate service in England and Wales in respect of each of the proposals in the Comptroller and Auditor-General's report "Probate—Service to the Public"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Following the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General in February 1992, an internal review was commissioned to report on such matters as staffing levels, the organisation of the service, storage of records and computerisation. That review reported in April 1993 and made several recommendations which are presently under consideration, although, like the Comptroller and Auditor General's report, it confirmed that the structure and organisation of the probate service were generally sound. When further information is available, I will make a statement, but the hon. Member for Dundee, East can be assured that the high standard of service provided by staff in the probate service will be maintained.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Stefan Kiszko

Ms Lynne: To ask the Attorney-General when the report into the West Yorkshire police's handling of the Stefan Kiszko case by the Lancashire constabulary was completed and handed to the West Yorkshire police; and when the report was submitted to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

The Attorney-General: The report was submitted to the West Yorkshire police on 2 June 1993 and to the Director of Public Prosecutions on 3 June 1993.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Attorney-General how Stefan Kiszko and the family of Lesley Molseed have been kept up to date with the progress of the investigation, and whether they have been informed of the contents and conclusions of the Lancashire constabulary report, on the handling of the Stefan Kiszko case by the West Yorkshire police.

The Attorney-General: The police service rather than the Crown Prosecution Service has the responsibility for maintaining appropriate contact with victims and others affected by crime. I understand that the investigating officer and his team have kept the legal representative of Stefan Kiszko and the family of Lesley Molseed informed in general terms as to the progress of their investigation. The contents of police reports relating to investigations are, however, confidential.

Asil Nadir

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answer of 10 June, *Official Report*, column *334*,(1) how many Ministers were among those who made representations to him over Polly Peck prosecution;

(2) what action he took regarding the *(a)* written representations and *(b)* oral representations over the Polly Peck prosecution; if he advised those making oral representation to put those representations to him in writing; and in how many cases was this done;

(3) how many representations he has received from right hon. and hon. Members in the past two years over prosecutions relating to fraud where no court proceedings had yet taken place, excluding representations connected with the Polly Peck and Maxwell cases.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on 10 June, *Official Report*, column *334*, on Asil Nadir, how many of the representations received were *(a)* from Ministers and *(b)* from other hon. Members; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I receive many representations from hon. Members of all parties, both written and oral, about matters within my ministerial responsibility which they believe raise points either of general concern or of concern to particular constituents. Statistics are not maintained for either the overall number of such representations or the particular class mentioned by the hon. Members.

In some cases where the representations are informal or insufficiently precise, I may invite the hon. Member to write to me.

Whenever the representations are sufficiently formal and particularised I consider the points raised carefully and dispassionately, causing inquiries to be made as necessary, before responding to the hon. Member.

I do not intend to expand on my answer to the hon. Member for Walsall, North of 10 June, *Official Report*, column *334*, about representations made about the case of Mr. Nadir.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Football Offences

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many offences under section 3(1) of the Football (Offences) Act 1991 were reported in 1992; and how many resulted in *(a)* prosecutions and *(b)* convictions.

Mr. Maclean: Offences committed under the Football Offences Act 1991 are not notifiable. However, the football unit of the National Criminal Intelligence Service has advised that there were 76 arrests at Football League matches under section 3 of the Football Offences Act 1991, which came into force on 10 August 1991, for the 1991-92 —August-May—season.

In England and Wales in 1991, there were six prosecutions under section 3 of the Act, five of which resulted in a conviction.

1992 data will not be available until the autumn.

Racial Incidents

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many racial incidents were reported to each police division in 1992; what proportion of those incidents involved assault or violence; and how many resulted in *(a)* prosecutions and *(b)* convictions.

Mr. Maclean: The only information held centrally relates to the number of reported racial incidents and I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) on 26 April, *Official Report*, column *266*.

Prostitution

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prostitution-related offences were recorded in 1992; and how many resulted in *(a)* prosecutions and *(b)* convictions.

Mr. Maclean: Information on the number of prostitution related offences is not recorded centrally.

The table shows the number of "known offenders"—those cautioned and found guilty—and the number of defendants prosecuted and convicted in England and Wales for prostitution-related offences in 1991.

1992 data will not be available until the autumn.

Number of "known offenders" (those cautioned and found guilty) and the number of defendants prosecuted at magistrates' courts and found guilty at all courts for prostitution related offences
1991
England and Wales

Offence	*Known offenders*	*Prosecutions*	*Convictions*
Indictable offences			
Procuring female for immoral purposes, or using drugs to obtain or facilitate sexual intercourse *(Sexual Offences Act 1956, sections 2, 3, 4, 22 and 23)*	5	13	4
Householder permitting unlawful sexual intercourse with girl under 16 *(Sexual Offences Act 1956, sections 25 and 26)*	1	3	1
Detention of female in brothel or other premises *(Sexual Offences Act 1956, section 24)*	1	—	—
Persons responsible for girl under 16 causing or encouraging her prostitution etc. *(Sexual Offences Act 1956, section 28)*	2	2	2
Living on earnings of prostitution or exercising control over prostitute *(Sexual Offences Act 1956, sections 30 and 31)*	81	106	79
Procuring, permitting or causing the prostitution etc. of female defective *(Sexual Offences Act 1956, sections 9, 27 and 29)*	1	—	1
Man or woman living wholly or in part on the earnings of male prostitution *(Sexual Offences Act 1967, section 5(1))*	—	—	—
Summary offences			
Kerb crawling *(Sexual Offences Act 1985, section 1)*	1,291	1,323	1,140
Persistent soliciting of women for the purpose of prostitution *(Sexual Offences Act 1985, section 2)*	186	71	51
Common prostitute behaving in a riotous and indecent manner in a public place *(Vagrancy Act 1824, section 3; and section 4 so far as it relates to this offence when committed by a person who has been convicted as an idle and disorderly person)*	6	6	6
Common prostitute loitering or soliciting for the purposes of prostitution *(Street Offences Act 1959, section 1)*	13,491	10,262	9,651
Any other similar offences	—	—	—
Persons aiding and abetting offences by prostitutes	—	—	—

North Wales Police

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures have been taken to improve the quality of service provided by the North Wales police force; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The quality of service provided by North Wales police is the responsibility of the chief constable.

Ruislip Kennels, Bracknell

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of whether Ruislip kennels, Bracknell, is conforming with the Animal Boarding Establishment Act 1963; and when they were last inspected.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Enforcement of the Animal Boarding Establishments Act 1963 is a matter for local authorities, which have powers to inspect licensed boarding establishments at all reasonable times and, if they wish, may nominate a veterinary surgeon or veterinary practitioner to do so.

I understand that Ruislip kennels were last inspected by the local authority on 15 December 1992, prior to the issue of a licence under the 1963 Act.

Bail Hostels

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many bail hostels there are within 50 miles of York; how many beds each of these hostels have; and on how many nights in the past 12 months *(a)* all or *(b)* 90 per cent. of those beds have been occupied.

Mr. Maclean: There are four approved bail hostels within a 50-mile radius of York:

	Places
South Bank, Cleveland	24
Howden House, West Yorkshire	27
Walmer Villas, West Yorkshire	18
Town Moor, South Yorkshire	25
Total	94

Statistics on the occupancy of hostels are collected centrally in terms of a monthly average percentage and not on a daily basis, but in none of the four hostels concerned was average occupancy 90 per cent. or above during the last 12 months.

Home Affairs Council

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) of 9 June, *Official Report*, column *246*, what were the voting figures for each member state recorded in the meeting of the EC Home Affairs Council held on 2 to 3 June.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Work in the field of intergovernmental co-operation proceeds by consensus; decisions at the meeting of Immigration and Trevi Ministers on 1 and 2 June therefore required the agreement of all member states.

Prisons, Wales

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to establish new penal institutions in Wales; where such prisons would be situated and for what complement of prisoners; whether such institutions would be run by the private or public sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Alex Carlile, dated June 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent question about plans to build new Prison Service establishments in Wales; where such prisons would be situated and their size; and whether such establishments would be run by the private or public sector.

Work which has been carried out on the long term planning of the Prison Service estate has shown that there is a need for additional accommodation in Wales. We have already decided to increase the capacity of both Swansea and Cardiff prisons by the provision of new houseblocks. But this expansion will not be sufficient to meet the demand for places, indicating the need for a further, new establishment. A final decision has not yet been made about such an establishment.

We are also concerned that all prisoners whose homes are in North Wales have to be held in establishments in England. But the numbers concerned are relatively small, and there are other areas which are under greater pressure and which must therefore have higher priority for relief.

On the question of whether any new establishment would be run by the private or public sector, no decision has yet been taken on the approach to be taken to the provision and management of new establishments.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Finance

Sir Rhodes Boyson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total amount of credit approvals/capital allocations given to local authorities in *(a)* England, *(b)* Greater London and *(c)* the south-east, excluding Greater London, for each year since 1982-83; and what is his estimate for 1992-93.

Mr. Curry: The information is as follows:

Local authority capital allocations

£ million

Year	*England*	*Greater London*	*South-east*[1]
1982-83	4,288	1,179	593
1983-84	4,101	1,041	605
1984-85	3,730	1,014	554
1985-86	3,209	739	512
1986-87	2,977	680	474
1987-88	2,975	671	455
1988-89	3,094	740	475
1989-90	2,904	635	454

[1] Excluding Greater London.

Local authority credit approvals

£ million

Year	*Issued*[1] *England*	*Used*[2] *England*	*Greater London*	*South-east*[3]
1990-91	2,827	2,786	744	386
[4]1991-92	3,222	3,139	752	544
[5]1992-93	3,287	3,171	707	531

[1] Total credit approvals issued to local authorities by central Government Departments. Excludes credit approvals issued by Department of Transport to certain local authority owned airport companies. A breakdown of credit approvals issued by region is not readily available.
[2] Total credit approvals used, as reported by local authorities to the Department. Figures may differ from credit approval issued because of under-use of credit approvals and because authorities may have underestimated credit approvals.
[3] Excluding Greater London.
[4] Outturn (provisional).
[5] Estimate.

Limehouse Link

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimated annual cost of maintenance of the Limehouse link in respect of *(a)* ventilation, *(b)* electricity, *(c)* surface repairs and *(d)* other expenses by category.

Mr. Baldry: The estimated annual cost of maintenance for the Limehouse link tunnel is as follows:

	£
(a) Ventilation	72,000
(b) Electricity	584,000
(c) Surface repairs	60,000
(d) Other costs	
—Pumps	20,000
—Lighting and Lamps	50,000
—Electrical equipment	50,000
—Service building (Depot)	48,000
—Salaries of tunnel operating staff	461,000
Total	£1,345,000

Methane Emissions

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish the report by the energy technology support unit assessing methane emissions from landfills.

Mr. Yeo: The report is being prepared as part of a series of reports from the controlled waste management research programme. It should be available within two months.

Council Tax

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many residential care homes are liable for council tax in each local authority; what consideration he has given to allowing council tax discounts to such homes if there are resident staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The total number of residential care homes in the area of each social services authority as at 31 March 1992 is set out in the table. No information is available on the distribution of these between districts in non-metropolitan areas or on the council tax liabilities relating to them.

People receiving care in registered homes are not counted towards the personal element of the council tax. The council tax bill for a dwelling where all the residents are recipients of care will therefore be subject to a 50 per cent. council tax discount—the tax payable will be the same as that due for any empty property. Members of staff with accommodation in the home will not affect this discount provided that their main home is elsewhere. If separate, self-contained accommodation is provided for staff, this will be subject to a separate council tax bill, and will not affect the tax payable in respect of the care home itself.

If, on the other hand, a member of staff has his sole or main residence in the care home itself, discount entitlement may be lost. But where this is the case, the discount forgone is likely to be smaller than the council tax for which the person would have been liable if he or she had lived elsewhere. It is also very likely to be smaller than the community charge which the member of staff will have paid in previous years.

Social services authority	*Number of care homes*
Avon	410
Barking	13
Barnet	83
Barnsley	48
Bedfordshire	133
Berkshire	195
Bexley	21
Birmingham	291
Bolton	53
Bradford	151
Brent	38
Bromley	81
Buckinghamshire	129
Bury	61
Calderdale	71
Cambridgeshire	147
Camden	39
Cheshire	220
City of London	0
Cleveland	120
Cornwall	265
Coventry	128
Croydon	99
Cumbria	175
Derbyshire	255
Devon	846
Doncaster	69
Dorset	453
Dudley	85
Durham	152
Ealing	56
East Sussex	589
Enfield	68
Essex	433
Gateshead	58
Gloucestershire	182
Greenwich	24
Hackney	31
Hammersmith	27
Hampshire	654
Haringey	64
Harrow	54
Havering	55
Hereford and Worcester	282
Hertfordshire	166
Hillingdon	48
Hounslow	23
Humberside	407
isle of Wight	120
Isles of Scilly	2
Islington	38
Kensington	23
Kent	707
Kingston upon Thames	39
Kirklees	103
Knowsley	24
Lambeth	84
Lancashire	823
Leeds	167
Leicestershire	247
Lewisham	70
Lincolnshire	233
Liverpool	99
Manchester	121
Merton	33
Newcastle upon Tyne	74
Newham	25
Norfolk	319
North Yorkshire	350
North Tyneside	80
Northamptonshire	190
Northumberland	98
Nottinghamshire	259
Oldham	63
Oxfordshire	121
Redbridge	47
Richmond upon Thames	35
Rochdale	53
Rotherham	39
Salford	56
Sandwell	54
Sefton	201
Sheffield	116

Social services authority	Number of care homes
Shropshire	151
Solihull	26
Somerset	205
South Tyneside	42
Southwark	38
St. Helens	33
Staffordshire	255
Stockport	72
Suffolk	196
Sunderland	73
Surrey	311
Sutton	36
Tameside	48
Tower Hamlets	17
Trafford	77
Wakefield	69
Walsall	63
Waltham Forest	53
Wandsworth	59
Warwickshire	148
West Sussex	435
Westminster	31
Wigan	61
Wiltshire	196
Wirral	145
Wolverhampton	68
TOTAL ENGLAND	16,073

Mineral Planning Permission

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce legislation to ensure that all mineral planning permission is reviewed at intervals of no longer than five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: We consulted last year on options for the updating and review of old mineral permissions. I hope to issue a further consultation paper on detailed proposals for change later in the summer. It would be wrong to pre-empt the content of that paper or to prejudge the outcome of further consultations.

Unitary Authorities

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the procedure for an area coterminous with a shire county to be considered for unitary authority status by the Local Government Commission.

Mr. Baldry: If people living in localities bordering on an area being reviewed by the Local Government Commission feel that their area should be included in that review, they may make representations to the commission. Where the commission judges that there is strong community support for a review to be extended across a county boundary, it may ask the Secretary of State for a direction to widen the scope of the review.

Housing (Compulsory Competitive Tendering)

Mr. Hawksley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the development of compulsory competitive tendering of housing management.

Sir George Young: I have today issued a consultation paper to all housing authorities in England, the local authority associations and other interested organisations. The paper sets out the Government's detailed proposals on some of the key components of compulsory competitive tendering—CCT—of housing management. I am placing copies in the Library.

The consultation paper follows discussion with the local authority associations and the eight local authorities which are piloting housing management CCT. It also takes account of work done by consultants in co-operation with the pilot authorities.

The proposals in the consultation paper address the scope of the defined activity, which lists the functions which authorities will have to subject to CCT, unless they contract them out voluntarily, the timetable that authorities will have to meet when they are introducing housing management CCT, and the size of contract packages. It is intended that the orders implementing the first two components should be in place from 1 April 1994. The third component will be implemented by way of guidance.

I hope that issuing our proposals at this stage will help authorities in their detailed preparations for the introduction of housing management CCT. In addition, I am keen to have authorities' comments on the practical implications of the proposals, so that the final package takes account of the different circumstances prevailing in different authorities.

CCT represents a new direction and opportunity for the management of local authority housing. Competition will improve quality of service and value for money by testing the market. It will expand the opportunities for the involvement of the private sector in housing management, while ensuring that local authorities themselves have every opportunity to compete. The consultation provisions of the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Bill, currently before Parliament, will ensure that tenants are fully involved throughout this process.

The Government want tenants to secure the benefits of CCT as soon as possible, allowing for the healthy development of the market. It is intended therefore that housing management CCT should be phased in over three years with the first contracts in operation from 1 April 1996. The proposals contained in this consultation paper are at the centre of housing management CCT and represent a major step towards its successful introduction.

London Docklands

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms Gordon) of 8 June, *Official Report*, column *191*, how many people attended the London Docklands development corporation banquet on 7 May; what proportion of the total cost was met from public funds; who were the catering contractors; and if he will place a list of those attending in the Library.

Sir George Young: Approximately 650 people attended the Limehouse link dinner on 14 May. The London Docklands development corporation paid £27,750 towards the cost, the remaining £21,950 was contributed by a variety of companies and individuals. The catering contractors were Crown Catering Group of Romford, Essex. I have asked the LDDC to send a list of participants to the hon. Member.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will publish the scheme council tax, used in calculating the transitional reduction for 1993-94, for each local authority in England;

(2) if he will publish the amount of other adjustments which formed part of the personal community charge in 1992-93 for each local authority in England;

(3) if he will publish the amount of the collection fund deficit at the most recent available date for each local authority in England.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him by the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), on 24 May, *Official Report*, column *369*.

Westminster City Council

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations Ministers or officials in his Department have received from, or on behalf of councillors, former councillors or officers who are the subject of the investigation by the district auditor into the designated sales programme of Westminister city council; and how many such representations were made by right hon. and hon. Members of this House.

Mr. Curry: I am not aware of any such representations.

Local Government Commission (Lancashire)

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Local Government Commission will commence its inquiry into the county of Lancashire.

Mr. Baldry: On 20 September 1993.

THORP

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received calling for a public inquiry to consider the potential environmental impact of planned radioactive discharges from BNFL's thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield; what is his policy on holding such an inquiry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 16 June 1993]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received a number of representations calling for a public inquiry into the draft authorisations for the disposal of radioactive waste from BNFL's Sellafield site. He has received the regulators' report on the public consultation and is considering it and, in accordance with the Radioactive Substances Act 1960, is considering whether to call in the applications for authorisation and if so whether to cause a local inquiry to be held.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent discussions he has had with, and what representations he has received from, senior management at BNFL on draft discharge authorisations for BNFL's thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 16 June 1993]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has had no recent discussions with senior management at British Nuclear Fuels plc. The chairman of BNFL has written to the Secretary of State on one recent occasion, about the timing of the issue of new authorisations for BNFL's Sellafield site.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations the Government have received calling for a joint Department of the Environment and Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food hearing to consider the potential environmental impact of planned radioactive discharges from BNFL's thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield; what is his policy on holding such an inquiry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 16 June 1993]:* The Government have received a number of representations calling for a hearing into the draft authorisations for the disposal of radioactive waste from BNFL's Sellafield site. My right hon. Friends the Secretary of State and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food have received the regulators' report on the public consultation and are considering it and, in accordance with the Radioactive Substances Act 1960, are considering whether to afford a hearing.

TRANSPORT

M1-M62 Link Road

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what is the current timetable for the establishment of an M1 to M62 link road; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what plans he has, following the formal consultation process, to alter or abandon the proposals for the M1 to M62 link road.

Mr. Key: We expect to be in a position to make an announcement about the way forward on this scheme before the autumn.

Market Testing

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all the market tests that have taken place in his Department since November 1992 and indicate, in each case, whether the result was the maintenance of in-house provision, or whether the service was contracted out.

Mr. Norris: The Department of Transport's market-testing programme for the year from October 1992 to September 1993 was set out in the first report on the citizens charter. None of the cases has yet reached award stage.

Transport Council

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) of 11 June, *Official Report*, columns *383-84*, what were the voting figures for each member state recorded in the meeting of the European Community's Transport Council held on 7 to 8 June.

Mr. MacGregor: No formal votes were taken.

M25

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make announcements on the subject of increasing the capacity of the M25 in *(a)* Kent, *(b)* Surrey, *(c)* Buckinghamshire, *(d)* Hertfordshire and *(e)* Essex.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend will make a statement in due course.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Civil Service College

Mr. Garrett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much has been spent on building works, maintenance and equipment at the Civil Service College, Sunningdale in each of the last five years.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information requested covering college expenditure at the Sunningdale site is as follows:

Year	*Building Works £ thousands*	*Maintenance £ thousands*	*Equipment £ thousands*
1988-89	130	436	351
1989-90	367	509	492
1990-91	2,072	519	863
1991-92	1,960	567	996
1992-93	3,891	632	357

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Overseas Aid

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total monetary value of overseas aid distributed in the 1992-93 financial year.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The provisional outturn of gross domestic expenditure on the Overseas Development Administration's external assistance programmes for developing countries and for eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union in 1992-93, including the United Kingdom's share of European community aid expenditure, is £2,098,886,000.

Aid and Trade Provision

Mr. Ottaway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the future of the aid and trade provision.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Government have concluded their review of the aid and trade provision—ATP. They have decided that the scheme should continue. It will help finance sound projects that will contribute to sustainable development and that are of particular industrial and commercial importance to Britain. The ATP budget for 1993-94 of £110 million will be enhanced by £7 million subject to parliamentary approval. The scheme will in future focus on creditworthy, low-income—income per head under $700—developing countries.

There will be a transitional period during which a few projects already at an advanced stage of consideration, which would not be eligible under the revised scheme, will exceptionally be taken forward. The selection of projects under the revised scheme will take account of the new OECD rules governing the use of tied aid which came into force in 1992. Specific measures to improve the effectiveness of ATP and achieve better value for money will be implemented immediately.

This revised scheme will provide a clearer framework for industry within which companies should be able to obtain an early indication of the prospects for ATP funding for individual projects.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Human Rights

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultation between Her Majesty's Government and the United Nations took place prior to the withdrawal by the United Nations of invitations to British-based human rights organisations concerned with human rights in *(a)* the Punjab, *(b)* Kashmir and *(c)* Assam, to attend a United Nations conference on human rights in Vienna; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The secretariat of the United Nations world conference on human rights was informed in advance of the conference that we had no objection to any British-based human rights non-governmental organisation being invited to participate. On learning of the withdrawal of the invitations to those organisations referred to by the hon. Member, we protested to the secretariat. As a direct result of this pressure, the invitations were reinstated.

Burma

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps have been taken to persuade the Government of Burma to comply with the European Community statement of 12 March.

Mr. Goodlad: With our European Community partners, we continue to monitor closely the human rights situation in Burma, and take every opportunity to underline our concern to the Burmese and in the appropriate international bodies.

Xanana Gusmao

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Government of Indonesia concerning the trial and imprisonment of Xanana Gusmao.

Mr. Goodlad: Following the trial's conclusion, Her Majesty's ambassador, together with other European Community representatives in Jakarta on 10 June, impressed on the Indonesian Government the importance the Community attach to humane treatment of Gusmao, including regular access by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

East Timor

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Government of Indonesia to urge it to meet the requirements of the International Committee of the Red Cross with regard to prison visits in East Timor.

Mr. Goodlad: Our ambassador in Jakarta with his European Community colleagues have urged the Indonesian authorities—most recently in representations this month—to facilitate the early resumption of International Committee of the Red Cross access to prisoners in East Timor.

Market Testing

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all the market tests that have taken place in his Department since November 1992 and indicate, in each case, whether the result was the maintenance of in-house provision, or whether the service was contracted out.

Mr. Goodlad: Of the activities to be investigated for market testing in the diplomatic wing of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, decisions have been reached on three. The client function for the television facilities unit has been transferred to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office from the Central Office of Information; installation of local radio networks and satellite communications by in-house teams will effectively be abolished in 1994; and supply services for office stationery and machinery are being contracted out. Of the activities scheduled to be market tested in the aid wing, one, administration of overseas pensions, has almost been completed. The service is to be retained in-house.

Guatemala

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations his Department has made to the Government of Guatemala about human rights abuses against its indigenous peoples; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We take every opportunity to make clear to the Guatemalan authorities the concern felt in this country about observance of human rights, including those of the indigenous people. We welcome President Ramiro de Leon Carpio's commitment to improve matters.

Libya

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consequences in terms of the availability of consular and other services are imposed on United Kingdom citizens who take up work in Libya against the advice of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Kingdom has no diplomatic relations with Libya. As a result, the small British interests section of the embassy of our protecting power, Italy, can offer only limited consular services to British nationals in Libya.

We advise British nationals planning visits to Libya to consider whether their journey is really necessary, and the resident British community to consider whether they need to remain.

I am sending the hon. Member a copy of the FCO's "Travel Advice on Libya".

Karyn Smith and Patricia Cahill

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence he has received on whether the drugs found in the possession of Karyn Smith and Patricia Cahill, currently serving gaol sentences in Bangkok, could have physically fitted in the luggage of the two women, as alleged in court; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The solicitor for the family of Karyn Smith has provided documentation to support his view that the drugs could not have fitted into the suitcases. HM Customs and Excise have reviewed this documentation. They have examined the photographs of the luggage and the drug containers. They are satisfied that the compressed heroin could have fitted into the luggage.

Child Abduction

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which members of the European Community have not signed *(a)* The Hague and *(b)* the European conventions on child abduction.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Ten countries of the European Community have ratified The Hague convention; Italy and Begium have yet to ratify the convention.

Eleven countries have signed and ratified the European convention. Italy has yet to ratify.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council held on 7 and 9 June.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and I represented the United Kingdom at the Foreign Affairs Council in Luxembourg on 7 to 9 June.

At an inter-institutional meeting between the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission on 7 June, no agreement was reached either on an inter-institutional agreement on subsidiarity or on a decision by the European Parliament on procedures for the ombudsman to be appointed by the Parliament. Both issues were blocked by the Parliament. Ministerial sessions of the accession negotiations with Norway, Austria, Sweden and Finland were held in the margins of the Council. These registered useful progress.

Ministers had a substantial discussion on former Yugoslavia. They reaffirmed the overriding importance of efforts to achieve a lasting and equitable peace in co-operation with the rest of the international community, their full support for Lord Owen and Mr. Stoltenberg in their contacts with the parties, and their commitment to the Vance/Owen peace plan. They agreed that measures contained in the joint action programme set out by the United States, France, Spain, Russia and the United

Kingdom on 22 May should be followed up: they will support the United Nations Secretary-General's efforts to attract further troops and funding to implement United Nations Security Council resolution 836 on safe areas. They called for an increase in the international presence in Kosovo and Macedonia to help pre-empt possible spillover of the conflict.

The Council heard a report by Sir Leon Brittan on recent developments related to the GATT Uruguay round negotiations. The French Foreign Minister presented his Government's recent memorandum setting out the French position on the round. The Council had a thorough exchange of views on both of these statements. We share the Commission's hope that it will be possible to agree the outline of an agreement on market access and services by the time of the economic summit in Tokyo in July.

The Council also approved the EC/United States oilseeds agreement, which was negotiated as part of the Blair House agriculture package last November.

Over lunch, Ministers discussed the humanitarian situation in northern Iraq, the continuing need for emergency aid, and the requirement for longer term development assistance. Ministers agreed the EC response to the establishment of the transitional executive council in South Africa. This will include the lifting of some of the remaining restrictions other than those related to the United Nations arms embargo, and the launch of the new EC development initiative. Sir Leon Brittan reported on his recent visit to Moscow.

In the afternoon, the Council discussed the Commission's paper for the Copenhagen European Council on strengthening relations with the central European associate countries.

The Council then discussed a Commission paper on openness access to information, summarising progress made since the Edinburgh European Council.

The Council discussed the revision of the regulations governing the EC structural funds. The Commission reaffirmed its inclusion of Merseyside and the highlands and islands of Scotland in its proposed list of objective 1 regions. The Minister of State argued for further regions in the United Kingdom to be added to the list of areas in the Community classified as objective 1. There was also discussion of how objective 2 and 5b areas should be determined. In the discussion of the proposed new objective 4, the United Kingdom reiterated its reserve of principle and argued against the diversion of European social fund money away from helping the long-term unemployed. The question of greater Council involvement in decisions relating to Community initiatives under the structural funds was also raised. It was agreed that an extraordinary General Affairs Council be held on 2 July to discuss these matters further.

The Danish presidency briefed the Council on its plans for the Copenhagen European Council. The main agenda items are likely to be economic growth and unemployment, the Community's relations with central and eastern Europe, the Community's relations with Russia, the progress of the enlargement negotiations, subsidiarity and the situation in the former Yugoslavia.

No formal votes were taken.

EDUCATION

Early Years Education

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to safeguard high-quality early years education; and what measures he will take to ensure the continued provision of suitably qualified graduate teachers for this age group.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Government's policies are designed to improve standards at all levels of education, including pupils' early years in school. My right hon. Friend has recently issued for consultation proposals for an additional route into early years teaching, to allow those who are sufficiently able and experienced to reach the necessary standards in one year; this will complement and not replace existing routes into teaching. The Government believe that schools should be able to decide for themselves among teachers with different academic qualifications who have the required knowledge and skills for effective teaching.

School Tests

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Education on what date he plans to send to schools plans for next year's tests.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend has written to all chairmen of governors and head teachers advising them of the streamlined arrangements for the 1994 tests for seven and 14-year-olds, which he announced to the House on 11 May. Detailed decisions on the scope and coverage of the tests will be made in the light of recommendations from Sir Ron Dearing, which are expected in July. Further information will be sent to schools as soon as possible thereafter.

Head Teachers

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the statutory duties and responsibilities on head teachers; and what monitoring is carried out to see they are fulfilled.

Mr. Robin Squire: Head teachers of maintained schools, including self-governing—grant-maintained—schools, have statutory responsibility for a number of functions relating to the organisation and management of the school, the discipline of its pupils and the curriculum. In undertaking these functions, they are accountable in the first instance to the governing body of the school and to the local education authority in those schools which it maintains. Parents also have a formal opportunity to discuss the way the head teacher has carried out his or her duties, at the annual meeting which governors must hold for parents. Independent inspections of schools every four years under the Education (Schools) Act 1992 will report on quality and standards in schools, including how effectively they discharge their statutory functions. Reports and governors' action plans will be published.

Top-up Fees

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received on the subject of top-up fees for university students; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) on 14 June, *Official Report*, column *420*.

Pre-school Places

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many pre-school places for three to five-year-olds are provided in England and Wales by *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* private sector employees, *(c)* central Government for their own employees and *(d)* the private sector.

Mr. Bowis: I have been asked to reply.

The information held centrally covers places for children aged under five in day nurseries, playgroups and with childminders. This shows local authority provision, registered and non-registered provision and is recorded in the publication "Children's Day Care Facilities at 31 March 1991, England", copies of which are available in the Library. The number of pre-school places provided in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Terrorism

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were the figures for *(a)* killings by terrorists, *(b)* terrorist shooting incidents and *(c)* terrorist bombs, including explosions and defusings in 1985; and in which of the subsequent years the number of offences in each category has been lower.

Mr. Mates: In 1985, there were 47 murders believed to have been carried out by terrorist organisations, 237 terrorist shooting incidents and 215 terrorist bombs, including explosions and defusings. The number of terrorist incidents in each of these three categories has not been lower in any subsequent year.

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons were charged with terrorist offences in 1985; and in which of the subsequent years the number of such persons has been higher.

Mr. Mates: A total of 522 persons were charged with terrorist offences in 1985. The only subsequent year in which the number of such persons has been higher is 1986.

Compensation Agency

Sir James Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the business plan for 1993-94 for the Compensation Agency will be published.

Mr. Mates: The Compensation Agency's business plan for 1993-94 will be published today. The plan explains the agency's business and organisation and sets out assumptions about workloads and resources which underpin the plans and targets identified for the agency this year. I have made arrangements for copies to be placed in the Library.

PRIME MINISTER

UN Commission on Sustainable Development

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 7 June, *Official Report*, column *13*, if he will list the organisations or individuals to whom the United Kingdom report to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development has been or will be distributed.

The Prime Minister: Copies of the progress report have been sent to the commission's secretariat and copies are available for delegates attending the commission's meeting this week and next in New York. Copies were also made available to delegates who attended an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development meeting in Paris last week.

Colombia

Mr. Cabom: To ask the Prime Minister when he plans to meet the President of Colombia.

The Prime Minister: I look forward to meeting President Gaviria again during his planned visit to this country from 26 to 30 July

Voluntary Bodies (Grants)

Mr. Moss: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the total amount paid in grants by central Government Departments to voluntary bodies during the financial year 1991-92; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Central Government funding to voluntary organisations in 1991-92 amounted to £3,387 million. Of this, £2,897 million consisted of payments to voluntary housing associations and £490 million went directly to a variety of voluntary organisations to support provision of services and a wide range of activities and projects.

The amount spent under individual departmental programmes was as follows:

Voluntary bodies	£
Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	178,486
Defence	11,038,930
Education and Science	5,503,286
Sports Council	14,255,000
Employment	32,693,716
Environment (including Energy Efficiency Office)	
Direct grants	24,854,376
Urban programme	54,400,000
Housing corporation	2,459,327,000
Countryside Commission	1,115,000
English Nature	1,057,000
Rural Development Commission	5,554,000
UK 2000 initiative	508,000
Derelict Land Grant	857,000
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	1,717,114
Overseas Development Administration	123,657,933
Health	
Direct grants	43,010,863
Health Education Authority	1,263,546
Home Office	
Direct grants	40,124,942
Equal Opportunities Commission	20,000
Commission for Racial Equality	773,740
Northern Ireland Office	
Direct grants	14,586,795
Housing associations and societies	40,538,706
Sports Council for Northern Ireland	657,954

Voluntary bodies	£
Scottish Office	
Direct grants	20,722,515
Urban programme	41,932,000
Housing Associations	234,000,000
Scottish Natural Heritage	1,660,000
Highland and Islands Enterprise	1,200,000
Sports Council for Scotland	1,510,621
Social Security	16,303,257
Trade and Industry	12,472,500
Transport	532,017
Welsh Office	
Direct grants	10,431,725
Urban programme	2,957,865
Joint Finance/Care in the community	224,455
Development Board for Rural Wales	423,000
Housing for Wales (Tai Cymru)—grants to housing associations	163,690,067
Sports Council for Wales and Play Wales Management Committee	1,435,988
GRAND TOTAL	3,387,209,397

I am placing in the Library of the House a list of voluntary bodies funded by the Government in 1991-92 other than those funded under housing programmes and the urban programme or via non-departmental public bodies.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 17 June.

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 17 June.

The Prime Minister: This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Teaching Company

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Prime Minister to which Cabinet Minister the Teaching Company management committee reports.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 16 June 1993]:* The Teaching Company management committee is a sub-committee of the Science and Engineering Research Council—SERC—and, therefore, formally reports to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. However, the terms of reference of this committee require it, inter alia, to report to the engineering board of SERC and to the Department of Trade and Industry, as well as to other funding bodies, and to advise SERC's engineering board, the DTI and others on the development of the scheme.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Theatres

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what information he has on the number of theatres that have closed in *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Wales and *(d)* Northern Ireland since 1979.

Mr. Brooke: The information requested is not held centrally. I am however advised by the Theatres Trust that the rate of loss of theatres has slowed significantly since the mid-1970s; indeed, a number of theatres referred to as being closed in the report of a 1982 survey have subsequently reopened.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Cutlery and Silverware

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chairman of the Catering Committee (1) whether compensation has been sought from the firm which failed to scrap or remove the two portcullis engravings from the two consignments of House of Commons cutlery and silverware as agreed;

(2) which firm failed to carry out the undertaking either to remove all marks or scrap the two recent consignments of House of Commons cutlery and silverware; and to which firm the items were subsequently sold.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: This is a matter for the Director of Catering Services and I shall ask her to write to the hon. Member.

HEALTH

Adoption

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the average time spent in fostered care/social service care prior to adoption by children adopted in each of the last 15 years;

(2) what was the average time spent in foster care/social service care prior to adoption in each of the last 15 years for children adopted at the age of less than one year, one to four, five to nine, 10 to 14 and 15 to 17 years.

Mr. Bowis: Information held centrally relates to the length of time a child was in care under the last legal status before leaving care. This will often be less than the total time he or she was in care. Averages for children leaving care on adoption or being freed for adoption for the year ending 31 March 1991 are shown in the table; figures for earlier years could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The number of children leaving care in six duration bands are published in "Children in Care of Local Authorities, England", of which copies are available in the Library. Statistics on the total time looked after are being collected from 14 October 1991, but processing for the period ended 31 March 1992 is not yet complete.

Number of children leaving care on adoption or on being freed for adoption in the year ending 31 March 1991: England

Age on leaving care	Number of children leaving care	Average duration of last legal status on leaving care (years)
All ages	2,439	3·4
Under 1	469	0·5
1 and under 5	899	2·1
5 and under 10	701	4·1
10 and under 15	275	7·4
16 and over	98	11·5

Children who were readmitted to care subsequently in the year ended 31 March 1991 are excluded. For children subject to a parental rights resolution, the duration of legal status relates to their time in care under section 2 of the Child Care Act 1980, not since the resolution.

Trent Hospital Trusts

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give for each of the hospital trusts in the Trent region, the names of the chairman and non-executive directors, their occupations or professions and details of any allowances or remuneration payable.

Dr. Mawhinney: The names of chairmen and non-executive directors of national health service trusts in Trent region and the most up-to-date information about their occupations are shown in the table:

NOTTINGHAM COMMUNITY HEALTH NHS TRUST
Chairman:
Mr. I. Maclean—Group Director

Non-executive directors:
Mr. A. Ripley—Retired Director
Mr. B. Cooke—Former Bank Manager
Mrs. J. Sterck—Voluntary Service Worker
Mr. M. Rudge—Housing Association, Deputy Director
Professor C. Chilvers—Professor of Epidemiology, University of Nottingham

BASSETLAW HOSPITAL AND COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES NHS TRUST
Chairman:
Mrs. V. Dickinson—Housewife

Non-executive directors:
Mrs. J. Lee—General Manager
Mr. L. Taylor—Solicitor
Mr. P. Reynard—Former Company Director
Mrs. L. Turner—Librarian
Mr. R. Hassett—Chartered Surveyor

BARNSLEY COMMUNITY AND PRIORITY SERVICES NHS TRUST
Chairman:
Mr. D. Anderson—Managing Director

Non-executive directors:
Mr. P. Kefford—Management Consultant
Mr. P. Goldie—Building Society Manager
Mrs. J. R. Lees—Solicitor
Mr. K. Ellis—Community Worker
Mrs. M. Michaels—Local Government Manager

MULBERRY NHS TRUST
Chairman:
Mrs. D. L. Miller—Solicitor

Non-executive directors:
Mr. M. Beacham—Former Company Director
Mr. W. Carter—Company Director
Mr. M. Hewings—Accountant
Mr. M. Chappell—Farmer/Businessman
Mrs. L. Scrimshaw—Former Social Worker

SOUTH YORKSHIRE METROPOLITAN AND PARAMEDIC SERVICE NHS TRUST
Chairman:
Dr. B. Kingston—Director of Careers Advisory Service

Non-executive directors:
Mr. J. Chambers—Former Banker
Mr. S. Mahon—Accountant
Mrs. B. Godber—Former Red Cross Director
Mr. P. Threlfall—Retired Headteacher
Mrs. P. Battersby—Solicitor

WESTON PARK HOSPITAL NHS TRUST
Chairman:
Mr. R. J. Prest—Company Chairman

Non-executive directors:
Mr. B. Winston—Accountant
Professor B. Hancock—Professor of Clinical Oncology, University of Sheffield
Mr. W. Macdonald—Broadcast Consultant
Mrs. E. Hutton—Housewife
Mrs. A. Freemantle—Housewife

NOTTINGHAM CITY HOSPITAL NHS TRUST
Chairman:
Mr. N. Deakin—Chartered Accountant

Non-executive directors:
Mr. A. Walker—Consultant (housing area)
Mrs. R. Waite—Area Organiser WRVS
Professor I. Johnson—Professor, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Nottingham University
Mr. G. Martin—Management Consultant
Mr. R. Illingworth—Former Bank Executive

DONCASTER ROYAL INFIRMARY AND MONTAGU HOSPITAL NHS TRUST
Chairman:
Mr. C. Bryant—Corporate Business Solicitor

Non-executive directors:
Mr. G. Brown—Engineer
Mr. M. Mitchell—Director
Mr. J. Pickup—Surveyor
Mrs. R. Cottrell—Teacher
Mrs. E. Sparrow—Consultant

NORTHERN GENERAL HOSPITAL NHS TRUST
Chairman:
Mr. H. Stokes—Polytechnic Chairman

Non-executive directors:
Mr. B. Smith—Chartered Accountant
Mrs. J. Morris Cleasby—Marketing Consultant
Professor F. Sharp—Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, University of Sheffield
Mr. O. Lawn—Retired Civil Servant
Mrs. J. Short—Secretary

SHEFFIELD CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL NHS TRUST
Chairman:
Mr. A. Wood—Chartered Accountant

Non-executive directors:
Mr. R. Pickford—Solicitor
Vacancy—
Professor M. Tanner—Professor of Paediatrics, University of Sheffield
Mrs. B. Barr—Company Director
Vacancy—

CENTRAL SHEFFIELD UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL NHS TRUST
Chairman:
Dr. G. Tolley—Principal of Sheffield Polytechnic

Non-executive directors:
Mr. S. Hamilton—Businessman
Mr. A. Staniforth—Accountant
Dr. I. Rennie—Lecturer
Mrs. E. Swynnerton—Headteacher
Mrs. J. Lee—Social Worker

DONCASTER HEALTHCARE NHS TRUST
Chairman:
Mr. P. Horsburgh—Company Chairman and Managing Director

Non-executive directors:
Mr. J. Lucas—Accountant
Mr. J. Millar—General Manager
Mrs. M. Spencer—Magistrate
Mr. J. Liversedge—Chartered Valuation Surveyor
Miss C. Fleming—Solicitor

BARNSLEY DISTRICT GENERAL HOSPITAL NHS TRUST
Chairman:
Mr. A. Sherriff—Managing Director

Non-executive director:
Mr. M. Robbins—Retired Consultant
Mr. R. Cave—Accountant
Mrs. M. Young—Solicitor
Miss L. Ambler—Teacher
Mr. B. Levitt—Development Director

CENTRAL NOTTINGHAMSHIRE HEALTHCARE NHS TRUST
Chairman:
Mr. G. Vere-Laurie—Managing Director

Non-executive directors:
Ms L. Hamer—Treasurer
Ms A. Vintner—Managing Director
Mr. S. Brown—Company Director
Mr. A. Slade—Solicitor
Mrs. E. Hanson—Proprietor Interior Decorating Service

ROTHERHAM PRIORITY HEALTH SERVICES NHS TRUST
Chairman:
Mrs. L. Shelton

Non-executive directors:
Mr. T. Palmer—Property Manager
Mrs. R. Rusby—Farm Manager
Mrs. P. Qureshi—Community Volunteer
Mr. J. Hyde—Solicitor
Mr. J. Salmon—Company Director

CHESTERFIELD AND NORTH DERBYSHIRE ROYAL HOSPITAL NHS TRUST
Chairman:
Mr. P. Heaps—Company Managing Director

Non-executive directors:
Mr. P. Lindley—Chartered Accountant
Mrs. S. Cutt—Housewife
Mrs. G. Goucher—Director, Chamber Of Commerce
Mr. T. Barker—Personnel Director
Vacancy—

GLENFIELD HOSPITAL NHS TRUST
Chairman:
Mr. E. Stanger—Company Director

Non-executive directors:
Professor D. De Bono—Professor of Cardiology, University of Leicester
Mr. P. Cusack—Director, Age Concern
Mrs. F. Hussain—College Principal
Mrs. J. Beaver—Lecturer
Mr. P. Dobson—Managing Director

LEICESTER ROYAL INFIRMARY NHS TRUST
Chairman:
Mr. P. Hammersley—Commercial Director

Non-executive directors:
Mr. D. Ayres—Chairman & Co. Founder
Mrs. H. Gilfoy—Company Director
Professor D. Barnett—Head of Clinical Pharmacology Leicester University
Professor D. Chiddick—Executive Pro Vice Chancellor and Managing Director
Mrs. P. Mansfield—WRVS Organiser

SOUTH LINCOLNSHIRE COMMUNITY AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES NHS TRUST
Chairman:
Mrs. E. Allison—Trustee of Lincolnshire Red Cross

Non-executive directors:
Cllr E. Hopkins—Chairman of Builders Merchants
Mrs. M. Moorhouse—Headteacher
Miss M. Le-Hair—Solicitor
Mr. R. Blackbourn—Architect
Mr. S. Sydall—Chartered Accountant

FOSSE HEALTH, LEICESTERSHIRE COMMUNITY NHS TRUST
Chairman:
Mrs. W. Hickling—Proprietor, Pre-school Playgroup

Non-executive directors:
Mr. J. Butterfield—Accountant
Mr. R. Harris—Managing Director
Mr. J. Kapasi—Accountant
Mrs. J. Paraskeva—Director, National Youth Agency
Mrs. G. Parker—Assistant Director, Social Policy Research Unit

QUEEN'S MEDICAL CENTRE, NOTTINGHAM UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL NHS TRUST
Chairman:
Mr. M. Suthers—Solicitor

Non-executive directors:
Mr. G. Longbottom—Company Chief Executive and Chairman
Professor E. Symonds—Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Nottingham University
Mrs. C. Bowering—Headteacher
Mrs. P. Richards—Chief Executive, TEC

DERBY CITY GENERAL HOSPITAL NHS TRUST
Chairman:
Mr. N. Woods—Solicitor

Non-executive directors:
Mrs. B. Gildea—Personnel Manager
Mr. G. White—Chief Executive
Mrs. F. Cannon—Part Time PA
Mr. P. Dobby—Consultant
Mrs. N. Billing—Deputy College Principal

LEICESTER GENERAL HOSPITAL NHS TRUST
Chairman:
Mr. P. Stephens—Retired Financial Director

Non-executive directors:
Mr. G. Walker—Retired Managing Director
Mrs. C. Macpherson—Solicitor
Professor M. Clarke—Professor of Epidemiology, University of Leicester
Mrs. E. Carter—Property Consultant/Chartered Surveyor
Mr. S. Bathia—Accountant

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AMBULANCE SERVICE NHS TRUST
Chairman:
Mr. P. Featherby—Chartered Surveyor

Non-executive directors:
Mrs. J. Varnam—Chairman, Consumer Council
Mrs. G. Coppell—Citizens Advice Bureau Worker
Mr. A. Baines—Chartered Accountant
Mr. M. Panchal—Business Development Officer

ROTHERHAM GENERAL HOSPITALS NHS TRUST
Chairman:
Mr. A. Baker—Steel Company Executive

Non-executive directors:
Mr. J. Welch—Chartered Accountant
Mr. I. Stephen—Solicitor
Mr. M. Colbear—Company Chairman
Mrs. G. Brooke—Magistrate
Mrs. R. Muntus—Housewife

SOUTHERN DERBYSHIRE MENTAL HEALTH UNIT NHS TRUST

Chairman:
Ms J. Street—Chief Executive, Southern Derbyshire TEC

Non-executive directors:
Mr. J. Bowler—Chartered Accountant
Mr. M. Ludlow—Senior Economic Development Officer
Miss K. Johnson—Personnel Director
Mr. A. Morgan—Headteacher
Mr. W. Barron—Owner, Embroidery Business

COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES, SOUTHERN DERBYSHIRE NHS TRUST

Chairman:
Mrs. P. Zadora—Management Consultant

Non-executive directors:
Mr. C. Marsland—Company Chairman
Mr. J. Byrne—Solicitor
Mr. R. Brooksbank—Chartered Accountant
Mrs. J. Denton—Area Manager
Mr. B. Billings—Company Director

GAINBOROUGH & DISTRICT HEALTH CARE NHS TRUST

Chairman:
Mr. S. Buchanan-Parker—Marketing Consultant

Non-executive directors:
Mr. A. Roberts—Financial Director
Mr. D. Weir—Assistant Director of Resources
Mr. J. Jenkinson—Managing Director
Dr. V. Stanton—Managing Director
Mrs. E. LeMay—Housewife

LINCOLNSHIRE AMBULANCE & HEALTH TRANSPORT SERVICE NHS TRUST

Chairman:
Mr. A. Bell—Business & Training Consultant

Non-executive directors:
Mr. J. Robinson—Partner in Family Business
Mr. A. Gilpin—Banker
Mr. J. Hill—Engineer
Mrs. M. Lewis—Housewife
Mrs. Z. Scoley—

NHS trust chairmen are remunerated according to the unit turnover in 1988-89. The present annual rates are:

Unit turnover 1988-89	*Band*	*Rates PA* £
In excess of £50 million	Band 1	19,285
Between £20 million and £50 million	Band 2	17,145
Less than £20 million	Band 3	15,125

Non-executive directors of NHS trusts are remunerated at the rate of £5,000 per annum.

Chairmen and non-executive directors may also receive appropriate travelling and subsistence allowances.

Sports Injuries

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths and severe injuries were caused by sport in each of the last five years; and if she will publish figures for the number of such incidents for each main sport.

Mr. Sackville: The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys publishes statistics on sporting deaths in the monitor "Fatal accidents during sporting and leisure activities", series DH4, a copy of which is available in the Library. The latest year for which information is available is 1991. The information for 1987 to 1991 has been summarised and will be placed in the Library. More detailed information may be obtained from the monitor.

The information for severe injuries is published by the Department of Trade and Industry. Copies of the table will be placed in the Library.

Mental Illness

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of residential places available for people with mental illness in the most recent year available; and how many of these were family placements or provided respite care or housing.

Mr. Bowis: The information available centrally shows that at 31 March 1992 in England there were 11,569 places in staffed local authority and independent sector residential homes, primarily for people with mental illness and 1,997 places in unstaffed local authority homes. Information is not available centrally for unstaffed homes in the independent sector. Information on places is not broken down by the type of care.

In addition, there were 284 staffed residential homes reported at 31 March 1992 as serving mentally ill people as a second or third client group within the home, but information is not available on the number of places specifically designated for mentally ill people in these homes.

Patients Charters

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what redress and compensation are available to patients when health authorities and trusts fail to meet service commitments made in local and national patients charters.

Dr. Mawhinney: Health authorities and hospitals are responsible on a day-to-day basis for delivering patients charter rights and standards and are expected to ensure that service commitments are fully met.

In two specific instances the patients charter offers redress. Under the citizens charter, patients are guaranteed treatment within a maximum of two years—18 months for hip and knee replacement and cataract operations—from the date when their consultant places them on a waiting list. Where a hospital cannot give treatment within the guaranteed maximum waiting time, then health authorities should make alternative arrangements with another provider.

Also operations should not be cancelled on the day a patient is due to arrive in hospital. If this happens twice, then treatment should be arranged within one month of the date of the second cancellation.

Battens Disease

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what measures are being taken to ensure that all children who suffer from Battens disease are treated before they are three years of age;

(2) how many cases of Battens disease have been recorded in each year since 1983.

Mr. Bowis: Battens disease is extremely rare, and its prevalence is not precisely known. There is no known effective treatment for Battens disease. In the infantile forms, with onset before the age of three, the health care of the children is guided by the basic principles which apply to all types of progressive disorder with handicap.

NHS Employmnent Contracts

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice her Department gives to health authorities and trusts regarding employment contracts with particular reference to clauses designated to prevent staff speaking to the media.

Dr. Mawhinney: Where explicit clauses on safeguarding confidentiality are included in individual contracts of employment, they must not conflict with the principles set out in the advice "Guidance for staff on relations with the public and the media" EL(93)51, issued recently by Sir Duncan Nichol to all health authorities and trusts. A copy of the guidance is available in the Library.

Children's Health Records

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what percentage of children now have parent-held records;

(2) what percentage of purchasing authorities are contracting for parent-held records.

Mr. Bowis: Information from the British Paediatric Association, which has produced a model personal child health record, shows that 107 district health authorities are contracting for the record. Information on the number of children who have been issued with the record is not available centrally.

GP Fund Holders

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of general medical service funds is for budget holding in *(a)* 1990-91, *(b)* 1991-92, *(c)* 1992-93, *(d)* 1993-94 and *(e)* 1994-95.

Dr. Mawhinney: The main component of spending on the general medical services—GMS—non-cash-limited element, consists of the payment of general practitioners fees and expenses. Arrangements are identical for fund holders and non-fund holders and no special allocations are made to the former. For the cash-limited component, the proportion of funds allocated by the Department to regional health authorities specifically for GP fund holders is shown in the table. Regional health authorities can supplement the national funding from their revenue allocations for hospital and community health services. Information on supplementary funding is not available centrally. No decisions have been taken on the funding to be made available in 1994-95.

Funds allocated to Regional Health Authorities for Practice Fund Management Allowance and GP Fundholder Practice Staff as a proportion of total GMS cash-limited allocation

	Per cent.
1990-91	1
1991-92	8
1992-93	11
1993-94	[1]18

[1] Estimated as 1993-94 allocations have not yet been finalised.

Hospital Admission Times

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the guaranteed admission times for hospital treatment for each health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: As purchasers of health care, district health authorities will shortly be publishing their first annual report on performance achieved by their providers against all patients charter standards.

Junior Doctors (Working Hours)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health further to her answer of 7 June, *Official Report*, column *44*, what plans she has to assess the actual hours worked over 83 per week by junior doctors; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: We continue to make clear to health authorities and trusts that, as well as monitoring reductions in the contracted hours of junior doctors and dentists, they should ensure that actual hours of duty do not exceed contracted hours. We are determined to ensure that junior doctors and dentists see real improvements in their working lives from the new deal.

Learning Disabilities

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many adult training centres exist in each local authority for people with learning disabilities; what places are available; and what figures she has on the number of people assessed as suitable for admission to an adult training centre for whom there are currently no places available.

Mr. Bowis: The latest available information on the number of adult training centres, and the number of places available in them, by local authority, is published in "Adult Training Centres for People with Learning Disabilities and Local Authority Day Centres for Adults, at 31 March 1991, England", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Information on the number of people assessed as suitable for admission to an adult training centre for whom there are currently no places available is not available centrally.

Corporate Affairs Intelligence Unit

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the budget for the corporate affairs intelligence unit for 1992-93, 1993-94 and 1994-95.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 22 February at columns *482-83*.

Dental Health

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will make a statement on how the dental health care of children is being improved; and what further plans she will bring forward;

(2) what monitoring of adult and child dental health care her Department is now doing; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The provision of dental treatment and the monitoring of the dental health of all age groups of the population is a matter for district health authorities to undertake jointly with family health services authorities. Health authorities also arrange for the screening of teeth of children in state-funded schools at least three times in each child's school life.

The Department conducts decennial surveys of the dental health of adults and children alternately each five years. The last survey of adults was carried out in 1988. A survey of children is now in progress. The 1983 child dental health survey, copies of which are available in the Library, showed that among eight-year-olds, the proportion with some active decay in their permanent dentition had decreased from 40 per cent. in 1973 to 17 per cent. in 1983 and among 14-year-olds from 61 per cent. to 37 per cent.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to bring forward new proposals for dental remuneration; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: We shall announce our proposals in due course.

Water Fluoridation

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what indemnities have been given by Yorkshire regional health authority to Yorkshire Water plc against all claims arising from fluoridation of water supplies; if she will place a copy of the indemnity in the Library; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Though indemnities against liabilities arising from fluoridation may be provided, Yorkshire Water plc has not yet sought them.

South-West Health Authorities

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give details of the chairmen and non-executive members appointed to the South West regional health authority and to NHS trusts in the south-west, listing their current occupations and whether their main residence is within the authority or trust area.

Dr. Mawhinney: A list of all such appointees and the most recent information about their occupations, where this is held, is shown in the table. Where possible, people appointed to health authorities and national health service trusts are expected either to live or work in, or have other connections with the area served by the authority or trust.

Name and Position in authority		*Occupation/Profession*
SOUTH WESTERN REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY		
Regional Chairman:	Ms R. Fritchie	Company Director
Non-executive members:	Mr. U. Woodburn	Solicitor and Partner
	Mr. D. Strachan	Management Consultant
	Dame M. Fry	Former Chairman
	Sir J. Kingman	Vice Chancellor, University of Bristol
	Vacancy	—
GLOUCESTERSHIRE ROYAL NHS TRUST		
Chairman:	Lady S. Beesley	Journalist/Personnel Manager
Non-executive directors:	Mr. A. Eve	Partner and Retired Chartered Accountant
	Mr. G. Lane	Director of Operations
	Mr. G. Simon	Solicitor/Consultant
	Mr. P. Beloe	Food Service Director
	Mrs. M. Melling	Freelance Training Consultant
EAST SOMERSET NHS TRUST		
Chairman:	Mr. M. Carter	Company Director
Non-executive directors:	Mr. T. Chappell	Managing Director
	Mr. T. George	Solicitor
	Mr. J. Keegan	Senior Lecturer in Military History
	Mrs. P. Clark	—
	Vacancy	—
CORNWALL AND ISLES OF SCILLY MENTAL HANDICAP NHS TRUST		
Chairman:	Reverend T. McCabe	Clergyman
Non-executive directors:	Mrs. M. Bristow	Counsellor
	Mr. A. Bell	Shipping Consultant
	Ms F. Hunt	Freelance Writer and Supply Teacher
	Mr. R. Stephens	Solicitor
SOUTH DEVON HEALTH CARE NHS TRUST		
Chairman:	Mr. A. Boyce	Solicitor
Non-executive directors:	Mr. M. Hawkins	Engineer
	Mr. M. Dobson	Chartered Accountant
	Mrs. M. Ridgway	Secretary
	Mr. K. Holmes	Chartered Accountant
	Mr. G. Crosscombe	Civil Engineering Manager
EAST GLOUCESTERSHIRE NHS TRUST		
Chairman:	Mr. C. Thomson	Financial Consultant
Non-executive directors:	Mrs. S. Pullen	Secretary
	Mrs. J. Ralph	Voluntary Worker
	Mrs. M. Baynham	Secretary
	Mr. T. Griffin	Surveyor
	Dr. G. Shephard	Retired General Practitioner

Name and Position in authority		*Occupation/Profession*
TAUNTON AND SOMERSET NHS TRUST		
Chairman:	Mr. J. Stocks	Company Chairman
Non-executive directors:	Mr. R. Clark	Executive Director
	Mr. P. Swan	Group Finance Director
	Dr. P. Mason	Retired Medical Officer
	Mrs. J. Barrie	Stockbroker
	Mrs. M. Pollard	Voluntary Worker
WESTERN AREA NHS TRUST		
Chairman:	Mr. J. Dickson	Engineer
Non-executive directors:	Mr. R. Norton-Collins	Plant Director
	Mr. J. Williams	Chartered Accountant
	Mr. M. Marsh	Architect
	Mr. J. Bailey	Solicitor
	Mrs. G. Lewis	Retired Secretary
CORNWALL HEALTHCARE NHS TRUST		
Chairman:	Capt. Mrs. A. Kirby-Harris	Army Education Officer
Non-executive directors:	Lady F. Banham	Voluntary Worker
	Mr. A. Wilkes	Chartered Accountant
	Mrs. J. Dunkley	Part-time Lecturer
	Maj. Gen. I. Baxter	Retired Army Officer
	Mr. S. Young	Chartered Accountant
UNITED BRISTOL HEALTHCARE NHS TRUST		
Chairman:	Mr. T. Durie	Lay Member of Bristol University Council
Non-executive directors:	Professor B. Pickering	Professor of Anatomy
	Mr. J. Woolley	Chief Executive
	Mr. H. Harrison	Farmer
	Mr. P. Sherwood	Retired Chief Executive
	Mrs. V. Cox	Nurse
NORTHERN DEVON HEALTHCARE NHS TRUST		
Chairman:	Sir M. Knight	Defence and Security Consultant
Non-executive directors:	Mr. G. Andrews	Consultant
	Mr. S. Pearce	Chartered Accountant
	Mr. J. Nash	Retired Schoolmaster
	Miss D. Dibble	Retired Manager/Buyer
	Mr. J. Urquhart	Pharmacist
FRENCHAY HEALTHCARE NHS TRUST		
Chairman:	Councillor C. Williams	Chartered Accountant
Non-executive directors:	Dr. D. Fox	Retired Medical Practitioner
	Mr. J. Kendal	Former Deputy Managing Director
	Professor P. Parsloe	Pro Vice Chancellor
	Mr. T. Bishop	Strategic Planning Manager
	Mr. D. Moffat	Businessman
THE ROYAL CORNWALL HOSPITALS AND WEST CORNWALL HOSPITALS NHS TRUST		
Chairman:	Mr. A. Galsworthy	Businessman
Non-executive directors:	Mr. J. Williams	Solicitor
	Mr. G. McCabe	—
	Mr. E. Latham	Retired Chairman
	Mrs. D. Henderson	Former Manager
	Mr. C. Micklewright	Finance Director
PHOENIX NHS TRUST		
Chairman:	Mr. D. Smith	University Director
Non-executive directors:	Mr. R. Maggs	External Affairs Manager
	Mr. K. Oxtoby	Chartered Electrical Engineer
	Mrs. J. Stevens	Occupational Psychologist and Management Consultant
	Mr. T. Kent	Redeployment Manager
	Mrs. J. Nation	Housewife
PLYMOUTH COMMUNITY SERVICES NHS TRUST		
Chairman:	Mr. A. Beauchamp	Solicitor
Non-executive directors:	Mrs. G. Beeching	Business Counsellor
	Mr. J. Nicholas	Property Developer
	Mr. E. Distin	Chartered Surveyor
	Mrs. I. Miles	Manager
	Vacancy	—

Name and Position in authority		Occupation/Profession
GLOUCESTERSHIRE AMBULANCE SERVICE NHS TRUST		
Chairman:	Mrs. J. Guillebaud	Magistrate
Non-executive directors:	Mrs. J. Soutter	Accountant
	Mr. M. Warner	Managing Director
	Mr. R. Bretherton	Solicitor
	Mr. C. Raymond	Independent Financial Broker
SOUTHMEAD HEALTH SERVICES NHS TRUST		
Chairman:	Professor I. Silver	Professor of Comparative Pathology
Non-executive directors:	Mr. A. Checkley	Retired Manager
	Mr. J. Portch	Company Director
	Ms K Lyon	Lecturer
	Mrs. R. Frankham	Chartered Accountant
	Mr. R. Johnson	Solicitor
AVON AMBULANCE SERVICE NHS TRUST		
Chairman:	Mr. D. Miller	Retired Regional Manager
Non-executive directors:	Dr. A. Antonelli	Management Development Adviser
	Mr. S. Johnson	Financial Consultant
	Mrs. A. Foot	Adult Education Tutor
	Mr. J. King	Retired Journalist
WEST COUNTRY AMBULANCE SERVICE NHS TRUST		
Chairman:	Mr. J. Pease-Watkin	Personnel Director
Non-executive directors:	Mrs. H. Bucklar	Partner in a Company
	Mr. J. Luttrell	Farmer and Forester
	Mrs. B. Collard	Locum Pharmacist
	Lt. Col. R. Perkins	Farmer
	Mr. P. Egan	Chartered Accountant
EXETER AND DISTRICT COMMUNITY HEALTH NHS TRUST		
Chairman:	Mrs. S. Russell	Former Hotelier
Non-executive directors:	Mrs. A. Halse	Housewife
	Mr. M. Domaille	Proprietor of Residential Home
	Miss M. Stokes	Retired Midwife
	Mr. A. Acton	Chartered Accountant
	Professor A. Roy	Retired Chief of Surgical Services
AVALON NHS TRUST		
Chairman:	Mrs. M. Topp	Voluntary Worker
Non-executive directors:	Sir D. Allen	Former Defence Services Secretary HM The Queen
	Ms C. Baron	Part-time Lecturer
	Mr. J. White	Partner in Company
	Lady E. Gass	Committee Member
	Mr. M. Pleeth	Retired Chief Executive
SEVERN NHS TRUST		
Chairman:	Mr. P. Parkhouse	Retired Civil Servant
Non-executive directors:	Mr. T. Boore	Joint Managing Director
	Mr. J. Colquhoun	Solicitor
	Ms S. Thame	Trainer and Management Consultant
	Mrs. C. Elwes	Commissioner
	Mr. C. Manners	Industrial Consultant
ROYAL DEVON AND EXETER NHS TRUST		
Chairman:	Professor Dame M. Turner-Warwick	Former President of Royal College of Physicians
Non-executive directors:	Mr. D. Lamb	Area Director
	Mrs. E. Tranah	Solicitor
	Mr. J. Wendover	Deputy Diretor
	Mr. H. Ball	Director
	Mrs. A. Mayes	Lecturer

Pharmacists

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place in the Library copies of her correspondence with the chairman of the Pharmaceutical Services National Committee concerning the modification or withdrawal of proposals for changes in the remuneration for pharmacists.

Dr. Mawhinney: Yes.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the outcome of her meeting with the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee on Tuesday 15 June.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department had a short, constructive meeting about the longer-term arrangements for pharmacists' remuneration and the elements of the settlement for 1993-94. Another formal meeting has been arranged for next month, with less formal joint working in the meantime to develop options further.

Neo-natal Units

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what action she is taking to ensure adequate provision of lung surfactant in NHS neo-natal intensive care units; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what action is being taken by her Department to improve nursing staff levels in NHS neo-natal units; and if she will make a statement;

(3) what new resources or policy initiatives are being devoted by her Department to increasing the number of temperature monitors, blood pressure monitors, ventilators and incubators available in NHS neo-natal units, and to updating existing equipment; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Allocations of funds to health authorities for purchasing health care services including neo-natal services are made on the basis of the size, age, distribution and relative health of their resident populations. Specific arrangements about staffing and equipment are matters for local decision. The Clinical Standards Advisory Group, set up by the United Kingdom Health Ministers, was asked to examine access to and availability of a number of specialised services, including neo-natal intensive care following the introduction of the national health service reforms. Its report and the Government's response will be published shortly. Health care purchasers and providers will need to take account of these in making decisions about future provision.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received from the British Association of Perinatal Medicine on the appropriate provision of paediatric consultants for each neo-natal unit; what response she has made; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: No recent representations have been received from the British Association of Perinatal Medicine.

Young Smokers

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has for each year since 1988 on the prevalence of 11 to 15-year-old smokers.

Mr. Sackville: Information relating to the prevalence of smoking among 11 to 15-year-olds is available from the biennial Office of Population Censuses and Surveys "Smoking Among Secondary School Children", as shown in the table. A copy of the publication is available in the Library.

Prevalence of smoking cigarettes among secondary school children, by sex England 1988-90

Per cent.

	All Pupils	*Age 11*	*12*	*13*	*14*	*15*
Boys						
1988						
Regular	7	—	2	5	8	17
Occasional	5	3	2	5	7	7
1990						
Regular	9	—	2	6	10	25
Occasional	6	4	4	5	8	10
Girls						
1988						
Regular	9	—	—	4	12	22
Occasional	5	1	1	5	7	9
1990						
Regular	11	1	2	9	16	25
Occasional	6	1	3	6	8	12

Notes:
1. Percentages rounded to the nearest whole figure.
2. "—": nil or less than 0·5.

Source: OPCS Smoking Among Secondary School Children.
Definitions: Regular smokers are those pupils who smoke at least one cigarette a week. Current smokers who smoke less than one cigarette a week are classified as occasional smokers.

"Help Us to Help You"

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the budget for the "Help Us to Help You" campaign.

Dr. Mawhinney: All regional and district health authorities, family health services authorities, national health service trusts, directly managed hospital units and community health councils have been sent copies of a "Help Us to Help You" information pack, which gives advice about how to develop a local campaign. The total cost of producing the packs was £31,870. Copies of the packs will be placed in the Library.

Paediatric Beds

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many intensive therapy unit beds for children there were in each of the last five years; and what was the total child population in each of those years;

(2) how many times in each of the last five years a child has been refused admission to children intensive therapy unit beds; and how many child intensive therapy unit beds are closed at present;

(3) what information she has on the children intensive therapy unit beds in each other EC country, and the total number of children in each of those countries;

(4) what was the number of *(a)* paediatric beds and *(b)* intensive care paediatric beds in each region in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 10 June 1993]:* Figures showing the number of beds allocated for paediatric care in each regional health authority from 1987-88 to 1991-92 are shown in the table with details of the population. For earlier years, from 1981, statistics were calculated on a different basis and are not comparable.

Although the figures show a decline in bed numbers in the period, patient activity has increased, due to the extended use of day surgery, decreases in lengths of stay, and developments in medical practice. Although the child population has remained fairly constant at around 9·5 million—under 16—patient activity in paediatrics increased by 58 per cent. between 1981 and 1988-89 and by 11·3 per cent. between 1988-89 and 1991-92.

Information on the number or management of designated paediatric intensive therapy beds here or in other European community countries is not available centrally. However, the Department has funded an independent survey of the beds currently available within the national health service as part of a review of the need for intensive care facilities for critically ill children which a working party established by the British Paediatric Association is carrying out. Its report is due in the autumn. We expect that it will help health authorities in assessing the needs of their child population and negotiating contracts with hospital provider units to meet these needs.

Average of daily number of available paediatric beds

Region	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Northern	825	778	742	714
Yorkshire	949	897	885	871
Trent	1,058	979	936	883
East Anglian	291	295	293	289
North West Thames	737	659	620	587
North East Thames	783	728	605	620
South East Thames	906	817	812	810
South West Thames	n/a	546	526	492
Wessex	444	494	495	472
Oxford	363	428	426	413
South Western	617	577	554	548
West Midlands	1,227	1,194	1,145	1,120
Mersey	810	775	715	673
North Western	1,284	1,263	1,256	1,177
Special Health Authorities	520	485	469	445
England:				
Total paediatric beds	[1]10,814	10,894	10,479	10,127
Child (under 16) (000s) Population	9,528·1	9,507·4	9,528·8	9,593·8

[1] Excludes figure for South West Thames—n/a 1987-88.

Health Visitors

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by clinical grade and specialty for each district health authority and regional health authority the number of health visitor staff employed as at 1 April.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 11 June 1993]:* The latest information available is shown in the table.

Health visitors employed at district level by clinical grade September 1991 (whole-time equivalent)

Region/district health authority	*Scale F*	*Scale G*	*Scale H*	*Scale I*	*Total*
ENGLAND TOTAL	230	8,230	1,620	300	10,380
Northern RHA	10	550	100	20	680
Yorkshire RHA	30	630	140	20	820
Trent RHA	10	810	150	40	1,000
East Anglian RHA	0	300	60	20	370
North West Thames RHA	40	590	150	30	820
North East Thames RHA	10	570	140	30	750
South East Thames RHA	0	540	130	30	700
South West Thames RHA	10	510	60	10	590
Wessex RHA	20	530	80	20	650
Oxford RHA	10	470	90	20	580
South Western RHA	20	530	110	0	670
West Midlands RHA	20	890	160	40	1,110
Mersey RHA	10	380	90	10	500
North Western RHA	40	940	150	10	1,150
FHSA	—	0	—	—	0
Northern RHA	10	550	100	20	680
HQ and Units	0	100	20	10	120
Hartlepool	0	30	10	0	40
North Tees	0	30	0	0	30
South Tees	—	0	0	—	0
East Cumbria	0	30	0	—	30
South Cumbria	—	30	10	—	40
West Cumbria	—	20	10	0	30
Darlington	—	20	0	—	20
Durham	—	20	10	—	30
North West Durham	—	20	0	0	20
South West Durham	—	20	10	—	30
Northumberland	0	70	10	—	70
Gateshead	—	40	10	0	50
Newcastle	0	40	10	10	60
North Tyneside	—	—	—	—	—
South Tyneside	—	30	0	0	30
Sunderland	—	60	10	0	70
Yorkshire RHA	30	630	140	20	820
Hull	0	50	10	—	60

Region/district health authority	Scale F	Scale G	Scale H	Scale I	Total
East Yorkshire	0	30	10	—	40
Grimsby	—	30	0	—	30
Scunthorpe	0	30	10	0	50
Northallerton	—	20	0	0	20
York	—	50	0	0	50
Scarborough	0	30	10	0	40
Harrogate	—	10	0	0	20
Bradford	—	70	10	0	90
Airedale	0	30	10	—	40
Calderdale	10	50	10	0	60
Huddersfield	—	40	10	—	50
Dewsbury	0	—	10	0	10
Leeds	10	120	40	0	170
Wakefield	0	30	0	10	40
Pontefract	0	30	10	0	40
Trent RHA	10	810	150	40	1,000
North Derbyshire	—	60	10	0	70
Southern Derbyshire	—	80	10	10	100
Leicestershire	—	160	30	10	200
North Lincolnshire	—	40	0	0	50
South Lincolnshire	—	40	10	—	50
Bassetlaw	—	10	0	0	20
Central Nottinghamshire	0	40	20	0	60
Nottingham	0	120	20	10	150
Barnsley	0	50	10	—	50
Doncaster	10	60	10	—	70
Rotherham	0	50	10	0	70
Sheffield	—	90	10	10	110
East Anglian RHA	0	300	60	20	370
Cambridge	—	40	10	0	50
Peterborough	—	40	10	—	40
West Suffolk	—	40	10	0	50
East Suffolk	—	50	10	0	60
Norwich	0	50	20	0	80
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	—	30	0	0	40
West Norfolk and Wisbech	0	30	10	0	40
Huntingdon	—	20	0	—	20
North West Thames RHA	40	590	150	30	820
North Bedfordshire	0	40	10	—	50
South Bedfordshire	—	40	20	—	60
North Hertfordshire	—	30	10	0	40
East Hertfordshire	10	50	10	0	80
North West Hertfordshire	—	40	10	—	50
South West Hertfordshire	0	30	10	—	40
Barnet	0	10	10	0	20
Harrow	—	30	10	0	40
Hillingdon	0	30	10	0	40
Hounslow and Spelthorne	20	50	30	0	90
Ealing	—	60	20	10	90
Riverside	0	60	10	10	90
Parkside	10	100	20	0	120
North East Thames RHA	10	570	140	30	750
Basildon and Thurrock	0	40	10	0	50
Mid Essex	—	40	10	0	50
North East Essex	—	50	10	0	50
West Essex	—	40	0	—	40
Southend	—	30	10	0	50
Barking Havering and Brentwood	0	50	10	0	70
Hampstead	—	20	10	—	30
City and Hackney	0	40	10	0	50
Newham	—	40	10	10	60
Tower Hamlets	0	50	20	0	70
Enfield	0	30	10	0	40
Haringey	0	20	10	0	40
Redbridge	—	30	10	0	40
Waltham Forest	0	30	10	0	40
Bloomsbury and Islington	0	60	20	0	80
South East Thames RHA	0	540	130	30	700
Brighton	—	30	10	—	40
Eastbourne	—	50	10	0	60
Hastings	—	20	0	0	30
South East Kent	—	40	10	0	50
Canterbury and Thanet	—	50	0	0	50

Region/district health authority	Scale F	Scale G	Scale H	Scale I	Total
Dartford and Gravesham	—	40	10	—	40
Maidstone	—	30	10	0	40
Medway	0	50	10	—	60
Tunbridge Wells	—	30	0	0	40
Bexley	—	40	10	—	40
Greenwich	0	30	20	0	50
Bromley	—	40	10	10	60
West Lambeth	—	20	10	0	30
Camberwell	—	20	10	—	40
Lewisham and North Southwark	0	50	20	10	80
South West Thames RHA	10	510	60	10	590
North West Surrey	—	0	—	—	0
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	—	60	10	0	60
South West Surrey	0	40	0	—	40
Mid Surrey	0	40	0	0	40
East Surrey	—	40	10	0	40
Chichester	—	30	0	—	40
Mid Downs	0	60	10	0	70
Worthing District	—	40	10	0	50
Croydon	—	60	0	0	60
Kingston and Esher	—	—	—	—	—
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	—	50	10	0	60
Wandsworth	—	30	10	—	40
Merton and Sutton	—	70	10	—	80
Wessex RHA	20	530	80	20	650
East Dorset	0	90	10	10	100
West Dorset	—	40	10	—	40
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	0	90	10	—	100
Southampton and South West Hampshire	10	70	20	0	110
Winchester	—	30	0	—	40
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	—	30	10	0	40
Salisbury	0	30	0	0	40
Swindon	—	50	10	0	50
Bath District	0	80	10	0	100
Isle of Wight	—	20	0	—	20
Oxford RHA	10	470	90	20	580
East Berkshire	0	60	10	0	80
West Berkshire	0	80	10	10	100
Aylesbury Vale	—	30	0	—	30
Wycombe	—	50	10	0	60
Milton Keynes	0	40	10	0	50
Kettering	—	40	10	0	50
Northampton	0	60	10	0	80
Oxfordshire	—	100	20	10	130
South Western RHA	20	530	110	0	670
Bristol and District	10	170	20	0	210
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	—	60	30	—	90
Exeter	0	40	0	—	50
North Devon	—	20	0	—	30
Plymouth	—	50	20	—	70
Torbay	—	40	10	—	40
Cheltenham and District	0	30	10	—	40
Gloucester	0	60	10	0	70
Somerset	0	50	10	—	70
West Midlands RHA	20	890	160	40	1,110
HQ and Units	—	0	0	—	0
Bromsgrove and Redditch	0	40	0	0	40
Herefordshire	—	30	0	0	40
Kidderminster and District	0	30	0	—	30
Worcester and District	10	40	10	—	60
Shropshire	—	80	10	0	90
Mid Staffordshire	0	40	10	—	50
North Staffordshire	—	80	10	0	90
South East Staffordshire	—	50	10	0	50
South Warwickshire	0	30	0	0	40
East Birmingham	0	30	10	0	40
North Birmingham	—	30	10	0	40
West Birmingham	—	30	10	0	40
Coventry	—	50	0	0	50
Dudley	0	60	0	0	70
Sandwell	—	50	10	0	70

Region/district health authority	Scale F	Scale G	Scale H	Scale I	Total
Solihull	—	70	10	0	80
Walsall	—	20	20	10	50
Wolverhampton	—	50	10	0	60
North East Warwickshire	0	20	0	0	20
South Birmingham	0	70	20	10	100
Mersey RHA	10	380	90	10	500
Chester	—	—	0	—	0
Crewe	—	30	10	—	40
Halton	—	60	0	0	70
Macclesfield	—	20	10	—	30
Warrington	0	30	10	0	40
Liverpool	0	60	30	0	90
St. Helens and Knowsley	0	60	10	0	80
Southport and Formby	—	20	0	0	30
South Sefton	—	30	10	0	40
Wirral	0	70	10	0	80
North Western RHA	40	940	150	10	1,150
Lancaster	—	30	0	0	30
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	20	70	20	—	110
Preston	—	40	0	—	40
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	0	70	10	—	80
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	—	60	10	0	70
West Lancashire	0	30	10	—	40
Chorley and South Ribble	—	50	10	—	50
Bolton	0	60	10	—	70
Bury	0	30	10	—	40
North Manchester	0	40	10	0	50
Central Manchester	0	30	10	0	40
Oldham	10 billion.	50	10	—	70

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Product Marking

Mr. Riddick: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals his Department has to require all retail products *(a)* to be labelled in metric units and *(b)* to be labelled with their price per metric unit of weight.

Mr. McLoughlin: All existing requirements for retail products to be marked with their weight or volume and for unit prices to be displayed are to be amended in accordance with the Units of Measurement Directive 1989.

Package Tours

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has had from the Association of British Travel Agents regarding the consequences of the EC package tour directive on its members.

Mr. McLoughlin: My Department maintained close contact with ABTA during the negotiation of the directive and during the preparation of the implementing regulations.

Wood

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the total annual value of imports into the United Kingdom of wood and wood-related products.

Mr. Needham: In 1992, total United Kingdom imports of wood and wood-related products were valued at £2·6 billion.

UKAEA Constabulary

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has for the future of the UKAEA constabulary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The future of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority constabulary will need to be considered in the context of the study I have set in hand to advise on options for the future of the Atomic Energy Authority. I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) on 1 April 1993, *Official Report*, column *407*.

Anti-dumping Cases

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the anti-dumping and countervailing action cases filed against British companies by United States steel companies; what progress has been made in each case; and what representations have been made by the DTI to the European Community and to the Government of the USA.

Mr. Needham: On 19 January 1993, the US Department of Commerce—DOC—imposed final duties on certain United Kingdom lead and bismuth carbon steel products as follows:

Company	Countervailing Duty Per cent.	Anti-Dumping Duty Per cent.
United Engineering Steels	12·69	25·82
Allied Steel and Wire	20·33	25·82
Glynwed	00·00	25·82

Folowing this decision, the US International Trade Commission—ITC—upheld the United States steel

However, in a separate anti-dumping case concerning steel rails exported by British Steel plc, the ITC rejected the United States industry's allegations of injury.

The US DOC have also imposed provisional countervailing and anti-dumping duties of 19·13 per cent. and 109·22 per cent. respectively on plate products produced by British Steel plc. Final determinations are expected on 21 June.

The Government are particularly concerned about countervailing duties imposed on the grounds that British Steel and others are still benefiting from subsidies paid prior to privatisation. We totally reject this allegation and have argued our case strenuously and in detail with the United States authorities. The European Commission has also taken up our case in its actions against the United States under the GATT subsidies and anti-dumping codes.

My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has raised the privatisation issue on several occasions in writing with Ron Brown, the US Secretary of Commerce, and his predecessor. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry also raised the subject with Mr. Brown in Paris on 2 June.

Space Planes

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what policy he has towards the development of space planes; and what studies, research or demonstration projects he supported in 1992-93 and proposes to support in 1993-94.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government recognise the importance of securing access to space for satellite manufacturers at the most economical cost and the role which reusable launchers, such as spaceplanes, might play in reducing those costs. The Government believe that the case for the development of such vehicles would need to be judged in the context of the likely international competition for the supply of launch services, the evolution of the uses of space and the costs of development.

The Government firmly believe that the development of such vehicles could only be afforded on an international collaborative basis and recognise the efforts made by United Kingdom companies to establish collaborative links with European and other industrial partners. The Government supported studies of winged launchers and spaceplanes through the European Space Agency—ESA—during 1992-93 and are supporting ESA studies of a rocket-assisted demonstration vehicle during 1993-94.

Textiles

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which issues he will raise in relation to the international trade in textiles when he next meets his EEC counterparts.

Mr. Needham: The provisional GATT agreement on future arrangements for international trade in textiles forms part of the continuing Uruguay round negotiations which are regularly discussed by the EC Council of Ministers.

Bankruptcies

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the latest figures for bankruptcies.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Information on insolvencies is regularly published by the Association of British Chambers of Commerce, on behalf of the Department of Trade and Industry, in "Business Briefing"; copies are available in the Library of the House. Figures for the first quarter of 1993 were published on 14 May 1993.

Post Office

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he last met the chairman of the Post Office; and what was discussed.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade last met Michael Heron, the chairman of the Post Office, on 19 May. They discussed various matters relating to the Post office and the Post Office review.

I had an introductory meeting with the chairman on 8 June.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many sub-post offices and post offices in the United Kingdom receive *(a)* remuneration in the form of basic payment and *(b)* payment for transactions carried out of less than £5,000, £6,000, £7,000, £8,000, £9,000, £10,000, £11,000 and £12,000 a year.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 16 June 1993]:* Some 2,700 offices receive remuneration in the form of fixed payment, rather than on a scale reflecting units of work transacted. The vast majority of these are paid less than £5,000. The remaining offices are paid on a sliding scale. Of these, some 4,150 offices are paid less than £10,900, and 8,240 offices between £10,900 and £30,150. Precise information is not available in the form requested on numbers of offices falling into £1,000 bands.

Radioactive Sand

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the application of *(a)* the export licence regime and *(b)* radioactive materials transport regulations to the export of sand from beaches and estuaries found to be radioactively contaminated.

Mr. Needham: There is no requirement for an export licence for sand under the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1992 unless it contains radioactive materials or properties as specified in the order. Equally, if sand or other material falls within the International Atomic Energy Agency definition of radioactive material, its transport would need to comply with that organisation's standards and international regulations for the transport of hazardous cargoes by air or sea.

EC Technology Report

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he received a copy of the European Commission report EUR 14456 of 1992, "Technology and the Future of Europe"; and what assessment he has made of the relevance of the report to the impact of emerging technologies on the British industrial economy.

Mr. McLoughlin: This report, which has only recently been brought to my attention, offers a useful analysis of how we have got to where we are in Europe, what challenges we are facing, what technologies are becoming important, what effects these technologies are having on us and what changes we are likely to see in future years.

Thus the report makes a useful contribution to the debate on how emerging technologies are affecting the economies of Europe.

Nuclear Safety

Mr. Hood: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make available the paper submitted to the Advisory Committee on the Safety of Nuclear Installations by the nuclear installations inspectorate on generic safety issues in Magnox nuclear reactors.

Mr. Eggar: No. However, I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) on 25 May 1993, *Official Report*, column *488*. I understand that the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate proposes to place a copy of its report on generic Magnox power station issues in the Library of the House in due course.

Steel Imports

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the cost to British industry of trading restraints on steel imports.

Mr. Needham: A precise estimate cannot readily be made, but the cost is likely to be small. In 1992 United Kingdom steel imports were unrestricted except from North Korea. For 1993, Community-wide quotas or tariff quotas are also in force against the Commonwealth of Independent States, Georgia, Bulgaria and the Czech and Slovak Republics, but United Kingdom imports of the products concerned from these sources accounted last year for only 1·17 per cent. of total United Kingdom steel consumption. The Government have made it clear in the Community that such measures should not be applied after this year unless they are clearly justified.

Assisted Areas

Mr. Devlin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he has yet submitted to the European Commission the Government's proposal for a new assisted areas map.

Mr. Heseltine: The Government's proposals for a new assisted areas map were submitted to the European Commission on 15 June for approval. As soon as Commission approval has been received, the proposed new map will be published. In order not to prejudice negotiation with the Commission and to avoid uncertainty, no information on the proposed map will be released until Commission approval has been received.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 7 June, *Official Report*, column *171*, if it is his intention to publish the outcome of his Department's assisted areas review before the end of July.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 16 June 1993]:* I hope to announce the outcome of the review before the House rises for the summer recess.

Loan Guarantee Scheme

Mr. Hutton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the average time taken to approve applications under the loan guarantee scheme in each of the last five years.

Mr. McLoughlin: No information is held on the average time taken to approve applications prior to January 1992. Since that time, 99 per cent. of applications were cleared by the Department of Trade and Industry within five working days of receipt.

Mr. Hutton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many applications under the loan guarantee scheme were successful in each of the last five years; and what was the average value of the loan guaranteed expressed in constant 1993 prices.

Mr. McLoughlin: Information on the scheme is held by financial year. The number of applications guaranteed in the last five years with their average value expressed in constant 1993 prices is as follows:

Year	*Loans guaranteed*	*Average value (£) (constant 1993 prices)*
1988-89	2,266	35,071
1989-90	3,204	36,323
1990-91	3,387	27,582
1991-92	2,933	24,515
1992-93	2,342	22,350

Mr. Hutton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total value of loans secured under the loan guarantee scheme in each region of Britain in each of the last five years, expressed in *(a)* cash and *(b)* constant 1993 prices.

Mr. McLoughlin: Information on the scheme is held by financial year. The total value of loans guaranteed in each region of Britain in each of the last five years, expressed in *(a)* cash and *(b)* constant 1993 prices is as follows:

Cash value of guaranteed loans (£ million)

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
North East	4·46	5·19	4·64	3·61	2·15
North West	6·76	10·13	8·59	5·43	3·55
Yorks and Humberside	5·25	7·47	5·13	3·33	3·75
West Midlands	4·95	6·32	5·93	4·71	3·56
East Midlands and Eastern	3·85	4·85	5·12	7·17	6·32
London and South East	22·01	41·62	36·90	27·32	17·74
South West	5·62	9·89	9·13	9·76	7·15
Scotland	4·14	7·67	4·44	4·29	4·33
Wales	5·45	5·34	3·47	3·28	3·39

	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Northern Ireland	1·12	·92	1·21	·58	·41
Value of guaranteed loans by constant 1993 prices (£ million)					
North East	5·57	6·08	5·12	3·73	2·15
North West	8·44	11·87	9·48	5·62	3·55
Yorks and Humberside	6·55	8·75	5·66	3·44	3·75
West Midlands	6·18	7·41	6·54	4·87	3·56
East Midlands and Eastern	4·81	5·68	5·65	7·42	6·32
London and South East	27·47	48·77	40·71	28·26	17·74
South West	7·01	11·59	10·07	10·10	7·15
Scotland	5·17	8·99	4·9	4·44	4·33
Wales	6·8	6·26	3·83	3·39	3·39
Northern Ireland	1·4	1·08	1·33	·60	·41

Trade Associations

Mr. Page: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to encourage trade associations to provide an effective voice in representing the needs of business to Government.

Mr. Heseltine: I want trade associations to be effective organisations—in representing the views of members to Government Departments, the European Commission and other bodies, in promoting the international competitiveness of their member companies and in providing a strong point of focus for their industry. The principal responsibility for ensuring that this is the case falls on the companies that are their members.

But the CBI also has a role to play. And so do the Government. We must be open in our discussions with companies and industrialists about our perceptions of the effectiveness of the organisations which represent them.

In light of this, I am considering adopting a new approach to representations from trade associations to my Department. Where a lead association has emerged in a sector and the subject of proposls was relevant to the sector as a whole, I would ask the lead association to co-ordinate representations received from other associations in that sector before submitting them to me.

To support the efforts of the trade associations to promote the competitiveness of their sectors, I am inviting them to submit proposals for "competitiveness clubs" to carry out benchmarking studies of processes important to their sectors. I propose allocating up to £0·5 million to support the 10 or so most attractive schemes.

I will be setting out my views in a speech which I am delivering at the CBI today. I am placing copies of my speech in the House of Commons Library.

Post Offices

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he proposes to take to allow post offices to widen the range of activities and businesses they undertake.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 15 June 1993]:* Sub-post offices may undertake an almost unlimited range of activities on the private side of their shops. Requests by Post Office Counters Ltd. to widen the range of activities undertaken by them through the post office network are considered on their merits. We have recently announced that Post Office Counters will be allowed to take on work in connection with the national lottery. More generally, we are considering the question of Counters' activities as part of our review of the structure and organisation of the Post Office.

Parcelforce

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has for the future of Parcelforce; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 15 June 1993]:* My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade announced on 15 July 1992 his intention of privatising Parcelforce—*Official Report*, column 1137. Decisions on the most appropriate method and timing for the sale will be announced in due course.

Shipbuilding

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the shipbuilding yards in the United Kingdom which have access to intervention funding; and where Her Majesty's Government have wholly or partly placed warship orders since 1985.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 15 June 1993]:* The following shipbuilders yards in the United Kingdom have access to the shipbuilding intervention fund:

Appledore Shipbuilders Ltd.
Richard Dunston (Hessle) Ltd.
FBM Marine Ltd.
Ferguson Shipbuilders Ltd.
Harland and Wolff Shipbuilding & Heavy Industries Ltd.
Kvaerner Govan Ltd.
John Mowlem Construction plc—McTay Marine Division
Richards (Shipbuilders) Ltd.
Yorkshire Dry Dock Co Ltd.

All yards listed, with the exception of Appledore Shipbuilders Ltd., Ferguson Shipbuilders Ltd. and Yorkshire Dry Dock Ltd have received orders from the Ministry of Defence since 1985. However, as the shipbuilding intervention fund does not apply to orders placed by the Ministry of Defence, no support has been provided in respect of those orders.

Research and Development

Dr. Moonie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to improve the take-up of grants and other incentives for research and development by small and medium enterprises.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 16 June 1993]:* The three schemes of support specifically for small and medium sized enterprises for research and development projects continue to be popular. The small firms merit award for

research and technology—SMART—and support for products under research—SPUR—have maintained their levels of activity and I expect all the available funds to be committed. Regional innovation grants—RIN—have experienced a dramatic increase in take up since May 1992 when the scheme was expanded to additional geographical areas, the upper limit on the size of business was raised to fewer than 50 employees and the restriction of one grant per business was removed. In the financial years 1991-92 and 1992-93 the take-up of the schemes was as follows:

Scheme	SMART (Stages 1 and 2)		SPUR		RIN	
	1991-92	1992-93	1991-92	1992-93	1991-92	1992-93
Applications	1,453	1,416	281	210	454	887
Awards	286	288	140	139	[1]193	[1]432

[1] Offers accepted.

Innovation Support

Dr. Moonie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to improve the ease of access to innovation support programmes by small and medium-sized enterprises.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 16 June 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to paragraph 2·18 of the recent White Paper "Realising Our Potential—Strategy for Science, Engineering and Technology" and to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade to my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) on 26 May, *Official Report*, columns *583-86*. One-stop shops will play a key role in providing access for smaller and medium-sized businesses to innovation support both from my Department and from other organisations.

Science and Engineering Research Council

Dr. Moonie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to draw up a concordat of co-operation between his Department and the Science and Engineering Research Council.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 16 June 1993]:* As the recent White Paper "Realising Our Potential: A Strategy for Science, Engineering and Technology" makes clear, a new system of research councils will come into effect on 1 April 1994. The Government have proposed that each of these new research councils should work with each of the Government Departments in which they have a significant policy connection to draw up and publish concordats. In the case of the Department of Trade and Industry, work to conclude concordats with the existing research councils has been under-way for a number of months.

"Forward Look"

Dr. Moonie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will designate one of his Ministers to be responsible for his Department's contribution to the Government's science and technology "Forward Look".

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 16 June 1993]:* Paragraph 2.37 of the recent White Paper "Realising Our Potential—A Strategy for Science, Engineering and Technology" describes the preparation of the forward look by the Office of Science and Technology, and the participation of Government Departments through the existing, well-established machinery of the official and ministerial Cabinet committees on science and technology.

Refrigerators

Mr. Cryer: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the annual number of second-hand refrigerators and freezers exported to South Africa; what precautions are taken to prevent leakage of harmful gases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 15 June 1993]:* Information on the export of second-hand refrigerators and freezers to South Africa is not available. Under section 33 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, it is illegal to treat, keep or dispose of controlled waste, which includes chlorofluorocarbon refrigerants, in a manner likely to cause pollution to the environment. There is no United Kingdom legislation covering discharges from refrigerators outside the United Kingdom.

Near-market Research

Dr. Moonie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what his Department's policy is with regard to the funding of near-market research.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 16 June 1993]:* I refer the hon. Gentleman to the recent Government White Paper "Realising Our Potential—A Strategy for Science, Engineering and Technology" (HMSO Cm 2250), sections 2.20 to 2.22.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Taxation and Benefits (Merger)

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what recent progress has been made towards merging the taxation and benefit systems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: There are no plans to merge the tax and benefit systems. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has, however, recently set up a working group to identify options for reducing the administrative difficulties for business caused by the difference in the rules for national insurance and income tax, which he announced in his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) on 26 May 1993 at column *638*.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the independent living fund ceased accepting applications under the special rules covering the terminally ill; and what are the financial savings from this decision.

Mr. Scott: The former independent living fund ceased to operate on 31 March 1993. At the same time two new bodies were established, one of which was the independent living (1993) fund. This fund is an independent trust. Within the discretion accorded them by the trust deed, the trustees are responsible for deciding the fund's priorities.

The trustees have recently decided that the fund's resources should be targeted on the most severely disabled people in order to allow them to live as full a life as possible in the community, rather than on terminally ill people, for whom separate provision is made both by this Department and the Department of Health as well as a number of charitable and voluntary bodies. Because the fund is cash limited, no financial savings arise from the trustees' decision.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the decision of the independent living fund not to give help to new applicants who are terminally ill.

Mr. Scott: The former independent living fund ceased to operate on 31 March 1993. At the same time, two new bodies were established, one of which was the independent living (1993) fund. This fund is an independent trust. Within the discretion accorded them by the trust deed, the trustees are responsible for deciding the fund's priorities.

The trustees have recently decided that the fund's resources should be targeted on the most severely disabled people in order to allow them to live as full a life as possible in the community, rather than on terminally ill people, for whom separate provision is made both by this Department and the Department of Health as well as a number of charitable and voluntary bodies.

Disability Allowances

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are in receipt of the mobility component of the disability living allowance in *(a)* Orkney and *(b)* Scotland.

Mr. Scott: The information is not readily available and dcould be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Compensation Scheme

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if the clearance target used in the new compensation scheme, announced on 4 May, will be the target for the year the payment should have been made or the target for the year the payment was finally made.

Mr. Hague: I refer the hon. Member to the reply to him on 21 May at columns *326-27*.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will publish a leaflet for the public setting out the rules governing the new compensation scheme for late payment of social security benefits announced on 4 May, to include the clearance targets relevant to each benefit;

(2) if he will publish the full rules governing the award and calculation of compensation in the new compensation scheme for late payment of social security benefits announced on 4 May.

Mr. Hague: The special payment arrangements to compensate for late payment of benefit are not new but were introduced several years ago. We have, however, recently significantly improved the arrangements by reducing, in the majority of cases, the period before which payment of compensation is considered and linking it with the relevant clearance targets.

The arrangements are ex-gratia and so it is not considered appropriate to publish the internal guidance. However, the criteria under which payment of compensation is considered are:

The delay must be six months plus the relevant target clearance time set for the majority of claims (usually between 85 per cent. and 95 per cent.);
The delay must be caused by official error;
The arrears must be £50 or more.
There are no plans to publish a leaflet.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the clearance target for each social security benefit which will be used in the calculation of the new compensation scheme announced on 4 May.

Mr. Hague: The targets will be used in the calculation of the revised compensation arrangements will be the Secretary of State secondary targets for the clearance of new claims to the relevant benefit as published in the Benefits Agency business plan. For those benefits which do not have a Secretary of State clearance target the target will be the operational or internal target set by the BA. In the case of those benefits which do not have a secondary clearance target, the primary target will be used.

Spending Statistics

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the change in social security spending in real terms between 1979 and 1992-93 and the proportion of this rise due to *(a)* increased benefits levels, *(b)* changes in demographic and family patterns and *(c)* changes in levels of unemployment.

Mr. Scott: Information in the form requested is not available, but the 1993 departmental report contains information about benefit expenditure on certain categories of beneficiaries. A copy of the report is in the Library. In real terms, social security spending, at 1992-93 prices, has risen from £46,341 million in 1978-79 to £78,343 million in 1992-93.

SCOTLAND

Timex

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the sum total of Government grants received by Timex Corporation and Timex Electronic Corporation in relation to their Dundee factories since 1980, indicating the year, amount and nature of each grant.

Mr. Stewart: The principal sources of Government grants available to Timex Corporation and subsequently Timex Electronics Corporation since 1980 have comprised regional development grant—RDG—and regional selective assistance—RSA. Comprehensive records on the RDG I scheme, which was terminated in 1984, are not retained. No grants were made in respect of the RDG II scheme which was terminated in 1988. Offers of RSA under which payments were made were as follows:

Year of offer	Amount offered
1983	£700,000
1985	£270,000
1987	£865,000

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number and proportion of children receiving school meals broken down into *(a)* paid and *(b)* free in (i) primary schools, (ii) secondary schools and (iii) special schools in each year since 1987-88.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 16 June 1993]:* The information requested, taken from the annual school meals census returns for each year since 1987-88, is as follows:

School Meals Survey: Schools/Departments

	Meals paid		Meals free		Total	
	Pupils	[1]Per cent.	Pupils	[1]Per cent.	Pupils	[1]Per cent.
Primary						
1987-88	106,319	26·3	126,303	31·2	232,622	57·5
1988-89	134,411	33·8	71,257	17·7	207,668	51·4
1989-90	142,737	35·4	69,862	17·3	212,599	52·7
1990-91	141,612	35·0	72,437	17·9	214,049	52·9
1991-92	135,871	33·8	76,792	19·1	212,663	52·9
Secondary						
1987-88	75,573	26·9	41,853	14·9	117,426	41·8
1988-89	73,318	27·9	27,384	10·4	100,702	38·3
1989-90	83,894	33·1	23,449	9·2	107,343	42·2
1990-91	85,249	34·7	23,505	9·6	108,754	44·2
1991-92	88,680	36·1	24,809	10·1	113,489	46·1
Special						
1987-88	1,603	20·5	5,856	74·8	7,459	95·2
1988-89	1,940	25·3	4,868	63·4	6,808	88·7
1989-90	2,068	28·8	4,343	60·6	6,411	89·4
1990-91	1,881	26·7	4,418	62·7	6,299	89·4
1991-92	1,710	24·5	4,275	61·2	5,985	85·7

[1] Percentage of pupils present on day of survey.

Note: In a number of cases, figures for special classes or units forming part of a primary or secondary school are included with the figures for that primary or secondary.

Near-market Research

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what his Department's policy is with regard to the funding of near-market research.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 16 June 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to paragraphs 2.20 to 2.22 of the White Paper "Realising Our Potential—A Strategy for Science, Engineering and Technology".

EMPLOYMENT

Youth Training, Newham

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of young people on the youth training scheme in the London borough of Newham in each of the last five years; and what percentage *(a)* finished their course and *(b)* left early.

Miss Widdecombe: Information is not available for the London borough of Newham. Results available are for east London area office, which later became London East training and enterprise council—LETEC—and includes the London borough of Newham.

Table 1 gives the number of youth training and table 2 gives completers and early leavers information, for each of the last five years.

Table 1
Youth Training Scheme/Youth Training
Numbers In-Training March 1989 to March 1993
East London Area Office[1]/London East TEC[2]

	Number
[1]March 1989	3,510
[1]March 1990	3,600
[1][3]March 1991	3,180
[3]March 1992	4,760
[3][4]March 1993	4,380

Source: SPECTRUM, Management Information, TEC Operating Agreement (Annex J).

[1] East London area office.

[2] Excludes Tower Hamlets. Excludes trainees in training with National Providers.

[3] London East TEC (includes Tower Hamlets).

[4] March 1993 figure is provisional.

Table 2
Youth training scheme/youth training completers and early leavers (percentage) April 1988 to January 1993 London East TEC area

	Completers	Early leavers[1]	Not stated/ not known
	Per cent.	Per cent.	Per cent.
April 1988 to March 1989	31	69	—
April 1989 to March 1990	26	74	—
April 1990 to March 1991	27	67	6
April 1991 to March 1992	25	68	7
April 1992 to January 1993[2]	24	66	9

Source: Youth Training Leavers Database.

[1] 'Early Leavers' are those whose actual completion date was earlier than anticipated at the time they started training. This group will include those starting employment and those who subsequently take up another Youth Training course or a full-time course elsewhere.

[2] 1992-93 figures are provisional.

Market Testing

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list all the market tests that have taken place in his Department since November 1992 and indicate, in each case, whether the result was the maintenance of in-house provision, or whether the service was contracted out.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Four tests have been completed since November 1992, all of which are included in the Employment Department headquarters' 1992-93 market-testing programme:

(i) van service—3 van service runs were tested, 2 were contracted out and 1 remained in-house;
(ii) travel service—was contracted out;
(iii) the Field System—was contracted out;
(iv) TECs and National Providers Unit—was contracted out.

Benlate

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what discussions are taking place with the United States Government on the investigation being undertaken by the Federal National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health into the use and effects of Benlate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 16 June 1993]:* No discussions are taking place with the United States Government on any investigation by the Federal National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health into the use and effects of Benlate.

Government Departments with responsibility for pesticides maintain a watching brief on the scientific and technical literature and assess the results of relevant research. Where appropriate, the results are forwarded to the independent Advisory Committee on Pesticides—ACP.

The ACP reviewed benomyl, the active ingredient in the pesticide product Benlate, in 1992 and considered further information from a university of California study in March 1993. The ACP concluded that there was no cause for concern over the continued use of benomyl in the United Kingdom.

WALES

Open-Heart Surgery

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many adults resident in Wales had open-heart surgery outside Wales in 1992.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The latest available information is given as follows:

Patients treated in English NHS hospitals: Finished consultant episodes, by main operation, 1991-92[1,2]

Aged 16 and over	*Age not known*
431	88

[1] Excludes patients recorded as being under 16 years of age.
[2] Includes operations of heart valves and adjacent structures, operations on coronary artery and other open heart operations.

Cancer

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cancer cases were confirmed per 1,000 population in each county in Wales in 1972, 1977, 1982, 1987 and 1992.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Data on cancer registrations in Wales for the current district health authorities are only available from 1974. Prior to this date, the Welsh Cancer Registry only collated data for the previous districts of south and mid Wales. Data for 1992 have not yet been processed. The latest available recorded number of cases of malignant cancers per 1,000 population for each health authority in Wales for 1977, 1982 and 1987 are given in the following table:

	1977[1]	*1982*[1,2]	*1987*
Clwyd	4·65	5·10	5·07
East Dyfed	4·85	4·67	6·23
Pembrokeshire	4·35	3·86	5·20
Gwent	3·73	4·19	5·58
Gwynedd	4·73	5·10	6·24
Mid Glamorgan	3·52	4·06	5·01
Powys	4·29	4·48	5·35
South Glamorgan	3·98	4·35	4·35
West Glamorgan	4·65	4·98	6·36
Wales	4·19	4·53	5·41

Source: Welsh Cancer Registry
[1] Data for these years have been revised since previous publication.
[2] 1982 data may be under-recorded due to industrial action in medical records departments at that time.

Firms (Receivership)

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the percentage change in the number of Welsh firms going into receivership between the first four months of 1993 and the first four months of 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Official statistics on companies placed into receivership are not available separately for Wales.

Strategic Planning Guidance

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to receive the strategic planning guidance document commissioned from the Assembly of Welsh Counties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply my predecessor gave to him on 27 May at column *716*.

Solvent Abuse

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in Wales have died from solvent abuse in each county in Wales in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The number of deaths to residents of Wales associated with abuse of volatile substances in each year since 1979 are given in the following table. Information at county level is not available for reasons of confidentiality.

	Deaths to residents
1979	1
1980	1
1981	2
1982	3
1983	2
1984	7
1985	2
1986	4
1987	8
1988	4
1989	2
1990	7

Source: St. George's Hospital Medical School.

Radon

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are being taken to help those people in Clwyd whose homes are at risk from radon seepage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The results of further research, to delineate more accurately areas where radon levels may be higher than average, are expected in the spring of 1994. In the meantime, free measurement of radon levels is available to concerned householders living in areas where concentrations may be elevated. Home renovation grants may be available for homes where radon concentrations are found to be above the Government action level of 200 bq/cu m.

Rural Schools

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many rural schools have been closed in each county in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information is not collected in the form requested. The available information is as follows:

Number of maintained primary schools

	Clwyd	*Dyfed*	*Gwent*	*Gwynedd*	*Mid-Glamorgan*	*Powys*	*South Glamorgan*	*West Glamorgan*	*Wales*
1979-80	264	355	278	200	321	131	178	198	1,925
1980-81	263	353	275	200	317	129	175	196	1,908
1981-82	260	347	265	199	315	125	171	191	1,873
1982-83	258	342	264	198	317	122	164	179	1,844
1983-84	253	338	261	198	314	121	161	175	1,821
1984-85	252	335	253	98	309	119	158	172	1,796
1985-86	251	329	239	198	312	117	156	172	1,774
1986-87	251	323	238	198	312	115	156	169	1,762
1987-88	252	323	232	196	312	114	156	168	1,753
1988-89	251	319	228	195	312	114	157	167	1,743
1989-90	248	315	226	194	312	113	157	164	1,729
1990-91	246	315	225	193	305	112	157	164	1,717
1991-92	245	315	215	192	306	109	158	164	1,704

(a) Excludes pupils in special schools

Number of maintained secondary schools[1]

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Clwyd	34	34	34	34	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	33
Dyfed	35	35	35	35	34	34	34	33	33	32	31	31	31
Gwent	40	38	38	35	35	35	35	33	33	34	34	34	33
Gwynedd	23	23	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	23	23	23	23
Mid-Glamorgan	41	41	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42
Powys	12	12	12	12	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13
South Glamorgan	30	30	30	29	29	29	29	29	28	28	28	27	27
West Glamorgan	26	26	26	27	26	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27
Wales	241	239	241	238	236	237	237	234	233	232	231	230	229

[1] Includes Grant Maintained schools.

Bathing Beaches

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are being taken to ensure that the bathing beaches at Kimnel bay and Rhyl comply with the mandatory coliform standards as laid down by the EC; and when they are expected to meet these standards.

Mr. Redwood: As part of its major investment programme, Dwr Cymru is constructing a long sea outfall and a new sewage treatment works in the area which, on completion in 1995, should ensure compliance of the bathing waters at Kimnel bay and Rhyl with the mandatory bacteriological standards of the EC bathing waters directive.

Coastal Erosion

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are being taken to protect vulnerable areas of the Welsh coast from damaging erosion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: District councils in Wales have spent over £32 million during the past 10 years protecting vulnerable areas of the Welsh coast from erosion, with some £21 million of this being provided by the Welsh Office as grant aid under the Coast Protection Act 1949.

Maritime district councils, the National Rivers Authority and other bodies whose interests involve coastal defence have formed themselves into coastal groups extending around the Welsh coast. These groups ensure that protection of the coastline is managed strategically. The Welsh office is working closely with these groups to co-ordinate a new survey of the complete Welsh coastline and its defences.

Welsh Development Agency (Chairman)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to fill the vacancy of chairman of the Welsh Development Agency.

Mr. Redwood: I expect to make an announcement about Dr. Jones' successor shortly.

Autism

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in Wales are known to suffer from autism; what measures are being taken to provide support and treatment to those children in Wales who suffer from autism; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Although detailed information is not held centrally, it is believed that autistic disorders affect between 2,500 and 5,000 people in Wales.

Financial assistance is provided, under the mental handicap strategy, for the development of services for people with autism where these have been identified as priorities by county joint planning teams.

Public Bodies

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 24 May, *Official Report*, column *467*, how many vacancies there are in Welsh non-departmental public bodies.

Mr. Redwood: As at 11 June, there were 18 vacancies among appointments which I make.

Tourism

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the contribution from tourism to the gross domestic product of Wales in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Current data do not allow such an assessment to be made, but the available information on expenditure by overnight and day visitors to Wales is listed as follows. Comparable figures prior to 1989 are not available.

Estimated expenditure by overnight and day visitors to Wales

	£ million[1]
1989	1,330
1990	1,260
1991	1,255

Source: Wales Tourist Board.
[1] To the nearest £5 million. Estimated expenditure by day visitors in 1988-89 is used for all years.

Details of Wales' gross domestic product at factor cost were published in the December 1992 edition of "Economic Trends" (No. 470), available in the Library of the House.

Regional Assistance

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether Aberconwy will be given priority in his discussions regarding allocation of objective 5(b) status in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: My overriding objective for the current review of the structural funds is to both retain and extend our present geographical coverage in Wales. The omission of Aberconwy from objective 5(b) status is widely recognised as an anomaly which needs to be rectified and my predecessor drew the attention of the relevant EC Commissioners to this fact earlier this year. I propose to continue to pursue vigorously its case for future eligibility.

Mental Health Act 1983

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people from Wales have been detained under section 2 of the Mental Health Act 1983 in each year since 1985.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is in the following table:

Admissions to hospitals and units in Wales under section 2 of the Mental Health Act 1983[1]

Year	
1985	275
1986	357
1987	329
1988	320
1989	327
1990	415
1991-92	380

[1] Prior to 30 September 1983 Section 2 was classified as Section 25 of the Mental Health Act 1959. The data collection system was revised in April 1991. Financial year figures are given for 1991-92.

NHS Staff

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* district nurses and *(b)* community midwifery staff have been employed by the NHS in Wales in each year since 1987.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Detailed breakdowns of nursing staff employed by health authorities and NHS trusts into occupational groups such as those requested are not considered reliable. However, information on the whole-time equivalent numbers of all nursing and midwifery staff is as follows.

Staff in post as at 30 September

	Number
1987	27,764
1988	27,920
1989	28,037
1990	28,093
1991	27,962
1992[1]	27,583

[1] In addition there are about 1,000 student nurses who have been reclassified as students from nurses following the introduction of Project 2000 nursing education reforms.

Trawsfynydd Lake

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the importance of Trawsfynydd lake as a centre for recreation in North Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Trawsfynydd lake is used for watersports, but has no particular significance as a centre for active recreation.

Market Testing

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all the market tests that have taken place in his Department since November 1992 and indicate, in each case, whether the result was the maintenance of in-house provision, or whether the service was contracted out.

Mr. Redwood: The contract for building management services previously undertaken by the Property Services Agency has been market tested and awarded to Kirkham, Williams and Lewis.

The catering service to the Welsh Office has also been market tested. The contract was retained by Forward Catering Service.

Landfill Sites

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many landfill sites have closed in Wales in each year since 1985; and what measures are being taken to prevent them leaking toxic liquids and explosive gases.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not maintained centrally, but is available from the individual district councils.

Local Government

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many private representations he has so far received on the reorganisation of local government in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: It was made clear in the White Paper that all responses received would, unless otherwise requested, be placed in the Welsh Office's library and the Library of the House. No respondents sending in representations to the Welsh Office have indicated that they want their comments to be private.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what closing date he has set for comments on the White Paper on the reorganisation of local government in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I have not set a formal closing date. But I have made it clear that I would find it helpful to receive comments by the end of June. That will be four months after the publication of the White Paper.

Cockle Pickers

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what recent representations he has received from cockle pickers in Wales about access to cockles; if he will seek to introduce legislation to license cockle pickers in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: None. Responsibility for managing inshore fisheries in Wales, including the licensing of cockle pickers, rests with sea fisheries committees, whose management regimes are enforced in accordance with byelaws which require my confirmation.

Minister for Women

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his assessment so far of the consequences of his decision to designate, in his Department, a Minister having responsibilities for women; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: My right hon. Friend the Minister of State has had special responsibility for issue relating to women in Wales for some years. He has been a member of the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Women's Issues since April 1992; and prior to that was a member of the ministerial group on women's issues.

The present ministerial sub committee aims to focus Government thinking and policy on women's issues and allows my Department to contribute to the overall range of Government activity affecting women.

My right hon. Friend's role also ensures that policy measures across the wide spectrum of my Department's own responsibilities are co-ordinated to take full account of the needs of women in Wales.

Urban Investment Grants

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 11 June, *Official Report*, columns *346-48*, if he will list the public bodies, other than the Welsh Office, which can offer urban investment grants; what are the maximum thresholds of grants above which the Welsh Office has to give separate approval; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Cardiff Bay development corporation is the only public sector body in Wales, other than the Welsh Office, which offers urban investment grants. Welsh Office approval is required if the development corporation proposes to make an offer of grant which is greater than the current delegation threshold for projects of £250,000. These delegation arrangements are no different from those which apply to other types of project.

Minister for Children

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will appoint a Minister for Children at his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: No.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Abattoirs

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made in considering the practical implications of the new regulations concerning small abattoirs.

Mr. Soames: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales gave to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on 27 May, *Official Report*, column *715*.

Multi-annual Guidance Programme

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the minimum and maximum number of half days provided under the multi-annual guidance programme obligation and the average for each segment of the fleet; and what relations those figures bear to the provisions made under the Sea Fish Conservation Act 1992 for *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* Northern Ireland, and by each port.

Mr. Jack: The United Kingdom's multi-annual guidance programme is expressed primarily in terms of capacity. The United Kingdom's target is a 19 per cent. reduction in capacity—45 per cent. of which can be achieved by reductions in time at sea. Time at sea will be controlled on an individual basis and initially the Sea Fish Licensing (Time at Sea) (Principles) Order will restrict fishing patterns to 1991 levels.

Fish Catches (Monitoring)

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many EC fishery officers are employed to monitor fish catches in each EC country that possesses an ocean fishing fleet.

Mr. Jack: The most recent information on numbers of fisheries officers employed in member states with ocean fishing fleets is contained in a Commission report on

monitoring implementation of the common fisheries policy, published in March 1992 a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

Floods

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to provide additional funding to help meet the costs resulting from the recent floods in Devon and Cornwall.

Mr. Jack: Local authorities that have incurred an exceptional financial burden as a consequence of the recent flooding events can apply to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment for activation of the Bellwin scheme of emergency financial assistance. Each case is considered on its merits.

Grant aid is available to local authorities and the National Rivers Authority from the Ministry for new and improved flood defence works. Grant provision has increased in recent years and priority is given to flood warning and urban flood and sea defence works.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Shipping and Shipbuilding

10. **Mr. Kilfoyle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measures are under consideration to arrest the decline of the British shipping and shipbuilding industries.

Mr. Dorrell: Along with the rest of United Kingdom industry, ship owners and builders are operating with the lowest rate of inflation for 30 years; the lowest interest rates in the EC; and the lowest rate of corporation tax in the EC. My hon. Friend the Economic Secretary will be meeting the Chamber of Shipping shortly to examine their case for special measures.

Unemployment

12. **Ms Short:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effect on the public sector borrowing requirement of a halving of the rate of unemployment.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply given earlier to the hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. O'Hara).

Any attempt to quantify the effect of changes in unemployment on the PSBR would depend on a large number of assumptions, and would be subject to great uncertainty. In particular, there are no reliable estimates of the effects of unemployment on tax revenues.

23. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effects of Government economic policies on unemployment over the past year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The Government's success in bringing down underlying inflation to its lowest levels for 25 years has created a secure foundation for sustained recovery. Interest rates are at their lowest levels for 15 years, and manufacturing unit wage cost performance is the best on record. These developments; combined with the measures for business and the unemployed in the March Budget, provide the basis for sustainable, non-inflationary growth and improving employment prospects, as recent labour market indicators show.

Public Sector Pay

13. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the Government's intentions for public sector pay for 1993-94.

Mr. Portillo: As announced in the last autumn statement, public sector pay restraint, which limits all settlement within the range zero to 1·5 per cent., will be applied for one year. There can be no catching-up settlements following that. Public sector pay is an important part of public expenditure and will obviously have to be kept under tight control.

Manufacturing (Unit Wage Growth)

14. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are his latest figures for unit wage growth in manufacturing in the United Kingdom, Germany and Japan.

Sir John Cope: Over the last year unit wage costs in Britain fell by almost 3 per cent. In comparison, they rose by 9 per cent. in Japan and 10 per cent. in Germany.

Tax Changes

15. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the impact of recent tax changes on economic recovery.

Mr. Dorrell: I have every confidence that the measures announced in the Budget will ensure recovery is sustainable. They demonstrate the Government's commitment to low inflation and sound public finances.

Unemployed People (Tax Burden)

16. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the direct and indirect tax burden is on a single person in receipt of unemployment benefit.

Mr. Dorrell: A single person receiving unemployment benefit with no other source of income will pay no income tax. The amount of indirect tax paid will depend on his pattern of spending.

Financial Policy

17. **Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the Governor of the Bank of England to discuss financial policy.

21. **Mr. Hanson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has recently held with the Governor of the Bank of England to discuss financial policy.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I meet the Governor from time to time to discuss a range of issues.

Taxation

18. **Mr. Davidson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest estimate he has about the income distribution of the direct and indirect tax burden.

Mr. Dorrell: The latest information is given in the May 1993 edition of "Economic Trends".

11 Downing Street (Rental Value)

19. **Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the rental value of the residential accommodation at 11 Downing street.

Sir John Cope: The Treasury is charged a rent of £139,359 per annum for No. 11 Downing street through the Government's internal charging, property repayment system. The residential element is not separately assessed.

G7 Summit

20. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measures he will be proposing at the G7 summit in Tokyo in July to enhance international economic growth.

Sir John Cope: The continuing weakness of the world economy is a serious cause for concern. Tackling the problem will require short-term national measures to boost confidence and promote recovery and medium-term measures to strengthen the sustainable rate of growth. The appropriate medium-term measures include a reduction of budget deficits and structural reform to make markets work better. However, the one single measure that will do most to promote non-inflationary growth is a successful outcome to the GATT negotiations.

Ministerial Responsibilities

22. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to reorganise the responsibilities undertaken by Ministers in his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have no plans at present.

Unemployment Benefit

24. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the proportion of public spending accounted for by unemployment benefit.

Mr. Portillo: In 1992-93, unemployment benefit accounted for 0·7 per cent. of general Government expenditure, excluding privatisation proceeds.

VAT (Fuel)

25. **Mr. Gapes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact of VAT on domestic fuel on inflation; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: The extension of VAT to domestic fuel and power is estimated to add just under 0·4 per cent. to the retail prices index in 1994-95, and just over 0·4 per cent. further in 1995-96.

Government Borrowing

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measures he intends to take to reduce Government borrowing.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The economic recovery will reduce Government borrowing. We shall also maintain firm control of public expenditure and implement the tax measures announced in the Budget.

Trinidad Terms

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) of 11 February 1993, *Official Report*, column *719*, what reasons underlie the treatment of levels of debt of other countries as confidential; and if such treatment has been requested by all the countries concerned.

Mr. Nelson: The answer to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn related to bilateral debt reduction undertaken by all of the Paris club group of creditor countries. We do not hold details of bilateral obligations between all debtor and creditor countries. Moreover, on United Kingdom bilateral debt, the details of individual debtors' positions are confidential to the country concerned and we cannot publish these figures without the consent of the authorities.

Bank of England

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has recently held with the Governor of the Bank of England about the state of the economy.

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer meets the Governor from time to time to discuss a range of issues.

Income Tax

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the expected current annual yield from income tax at the basic, lower and higher rates; what are the comparable figures for 10 and 15 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Estimates of taxpayers' income tax liabilities at the various rate bands are as follows:

£ billion

	1978-79[1]	*1983-84*[1]	*1993-94*
Lower rate	4·4	—	10·8
Basic rate	13·7	29·7	36·5
Higher rate	1·9	3·5	12·8
Investment income surcharge	0·2	0·2	—
Total income tax liability	20·2	33·4	60·1

[1] For years prior to 1990-91 liability is determined by the taxable income of the tax unit (ie single person or married couple). From 1990-91 onwards following the introduction of Independent Taxation each individual's liability is calculated separately.

Open-ended Investment Companies

Mr. Watts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made on legislation to allow the introduction of open-ended investment companies.

Mr. Nelson: Following informal consultations with the unit trust industry and others, the Treasury intends to publish later this year a consultation document on the proposed structure of onshore open-ended investment companies. This will discuss proposals for regulations under section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972 to permit, as a first step, the introduction of open-ended investment companies which fulfil the requirements of EC Council directive 85/611—the UCITS directive.

DEFENCE

School of Aeronautical Engineering

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to move the School of Aeronautical Engineering to Arborfield.

Mr. Hanley: The principles on which the further restructuring of the Army's training organisation were to be based were announced on 16 December 1992. Much detailed work has been done to identify the future training locations for the Army, but no decisions have yet been taken.

British Army of the Rhine

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many British soldiers are currently serving in Germany.

Mr. Hanley: The current military strength of the British Army of the Rhine is some 39,000.

Army Recruitment

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Regular Army recruiting offices operate a capping system whereby a top figure of potential recruits has been allocated irrespective of the number of potential applicants.

Mr. Hanley: Individual Army careers information offices do not operate capping systems. The total number of recruits into the Army is, however, limited by the number of vacancies which are forecast to arise. The acceptance of any potential recruit into the Army is therefore determined centrally and on merit, regardless of the Army careers information office to which he or she applied.

House Sales

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will establish a specific housing trust to oversee the disposal of MOD houses to local authorities and housing associations.

Mr. Hanley: There are no plans to set up such a body. It remains our policy to dispose of surplus married quarters as quickly as possible, with priority given to the services discount scheme.

Ulverston Drill Hall

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many offers were received for the purchase of the Ulverston drill hall; and when his Department intends to arrive at a decision as to which offer to accept.

Mr. Hanley: Four offers have been received and all are still being considered. A final decision will not be taken on which offer to accept until an alternative training venue has been found for the cadets who use the hall at present.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 18 June 1993

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Clerks

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what is the number of Clerks in the Department of the Clerk of the House; and how many are in grades with a higher salary than that to which a Member of Parliament's salary is linked.

Mr. Beith: Sixty and 35 respectively.

Day Nursery

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee when he expects a day nursery to be installed and operating within the precincts of the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Michael M. Martin: The Administration Committee is currently considering this matter, and has begun preparations for a survey to be conducted of potential demand for a nursery or a child care voucher system.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Clubs (Registration)

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he intends to review the legislation relating to the registration of clubs.

Mr. Ancram: Yes. Following widespread consultation locally, a review is already in progress.

Terrorists

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* loyalist and *(b)* republican prisoners were released on licence from indeterminate sentences for the terrorist murder of civilians in 1991 and 1992; and if he will indicate in each case the number of years served.

Mr. Mates: The information is as follows:

Indeterminate sentence prisoners released on licence for terrorist murder of civilians

Released on licence	*Number released by years served*								
	11-12	*12-13*	*13-14*	*14-15*	*15-16*	*16-17*	*17-18*	*18-19*	*Total released*
1991									
Loyalist	—	—	1	1	4	4	—	1	11
Republican	1	—	—	1	2	1	1	—	6
1992									
Loyalist	—	2	3	6	9	4	1	—	25
Republican	—	—	—	—	3	3	—	2	8

Notes:

1. Prisoners sentenced to detention during the Secretary of State's pleasure are included.
2. The table excludes licensees in whose cases the period served for retribution took into account significant assistance given to the authorities and prisoners whose licences have been revoked.

Coronary Angiogram Procedures

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what limits have been placed on the number of coronary angiogram procedures which can be performed each week in the Royal group of hospitals; and what effect these are having on the volume of candidates being considered for coronary artery bypass grafting.

Mr. Ancram: Cardiologists at the Royal group of hospitals treat patients on the basis of clinical need. The present capacity of the coronary catheterisation unit at the Royal group of hospitals, which performs coronary angiograms, is being fully utilised. No artificial restrictions have been placed on the number of procedures performed.

Cardiac Surgery

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how the waiting list for cardiac surgical operations in Northern Ireland has increased or decreased during the last 12 months.

Mr. Ancram: The total number waiting in Northern Ireland for treatment in the cardiac surgery specialty fell by 205 between March 1992 and March 1993 from 964 to 759.

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how the average waiting time for those people waiting for their first appointment with a cardiac surgeon has increased or decreased during the last 12 months.

Mr. Ancram: The information is not available. Information on waiting time for first appointments was not collected centrally until this year.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Departmental Buildings

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the buildings currently owned or rented by his Department, together with *(a)* the estimated value, *(b)* the annual rent and *(c)* the annual maintenance cost of each building in the current financial year.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment on 8 June, *Official Report*, column *194*. In addition to arrangements made by Property Holdings, projected expenditure by the Office of Public Service and Science during 1993-94 on maintenance in buildings occupied by the Department is £651,000.

Scientific Links (Japan)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) on 7 June, *Official Report*, columns 17-18, how many members the advisory group on scientific links with Japan and Pacific rim nations will have; what criteria he will use to choose the members of the advisory group; and if he will make it his policy to ensure the scientific implications of civil nuclear collaboration and co-operation is included on the agenda of the first meeting.

Mr. David Davis: The composition of the advisory group has not yet been decided. It will include representatives of industry, academia and Government who have extensive experience of scientific co-operation with this region. No agenda has yet been drawn up for the first meeting, but it will look at the whole range of science and technology relations, to identify areas where co-operation can be strengthened.

Citizens Charter

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the total cost to date of all the public information published and distributed as a consequence of the citizens charter programme.

Mr. Waldegrave: A key aim of the charter is that customers should have ready access to public services through clear and effective information. It is not possible to provide a total cost for all the charter-related information published and distributed: charters, charter standard statements and explanatory leaflets have been issued by a wide range of public service providers, including Government Departments, agencies, nationalised industries and local authorities.

HEALTH

Respiratory Stress Syndrome

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children have died from respiratory stress syndrome in each year since 1983.

Mr. Sackville: Numbers of deaths (underlying cause) from respiratory distress syndrome ICD[1] 769 for the years 1983 to 1991 is contained in the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys publication "Mortality statistics: cause" series DH2 nos. 10-18; copies of which are available in the Library. The information for 1992 is shown in the table.

Number of deaths from Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ICD 769)[1] for England and Wales, 1992[2]

Age group[3]	*Number*
Under 1	8

[1] International Classification of Diseases, ninth revision.

[2] Data from 1983 to 1992 are not comparable due to the changes to cause of death coding in 1986. From 1986 the number of deaths by cause excluded neonatal deaths, ie deaths of babies aged under 28 days. A new neonatal death certificate was introduced in January 1986, from which it is not possible to assign an underlying cause of death. Consequently, table 2 in series DH2 does not include neonatal deaths except in the figures for all causes.

[3] Deaths occurred only in those aged under one.

Battens Disease

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people have died from Battens disease in each year since 1983.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Deaths from Battens disease (underlying cause of death) in England and Wales, 1983-92

Year	*Number*
1983	8
1984	5
1985	6
1986	8
1987	7
1988	6
1989	5
1990	7
1991	8
1992	3

Intensive Care Cots

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures she is taking to increase the number of neonatal intensive care cots available in NHS hospitals.

Mr. Sackville: Health care provision, including neonatal intensive care facilities is a matter for decision by purchasing health authorities in the light of their assessment of local needs. The Clinical Standards Advisory Group, set up by the United Kingdom Health Departments, was asked to examine access to and availability of a number of specialised services, including neonatal intensive care, following the introduction of the national health service reforms. Its report and the Government's response will be published shortly. Health authorities will need to take account of these in planning future provision.

Bone Marrow Transplants

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many bone marrow transplants have been carried out in each year since 1983.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Psychiatric Patients

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the percentage on average of NHS psychiatric patients in private hospitals in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Market Testing

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list all the market tests that have taken place in her Department since November 1992 and indicate, in each case, whether the result was the maintenance of in-house provision, or whether the service was contracted out.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) on 15 February at col. 76.

Since then, the market test of the 1994 health survey has been completed. The contract has been awarded jointly to Social and Community Planning Research and University College, London. The health survey has previously been conducted by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Condoms

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the approximate budget for condoms in each region and in total for NHS family planning clinics in each of the last five years; and what percentage of this budget was used to provide condoms for general practices.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Drugs

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the expenditure on drugs by the family health services in England in 1992-93.

Dr. Mawhinney: The final outturn for 1992-93 is not yet available, but the latest supply estimate for the year was £2,660 million.

Health Expenditure

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of gross national product was spent on health in the EC as a whole, the United Kingdom and the USA in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: Total national health service expenditure in the United Kingdom as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) in each year since 1988-89 is shown in the table. GDP has been used rather than gross national product for consistency with other sources of information on public spending. Figures for the European Community and the United States of America are not available on a comparable basis.

United Kingdom health service expenditure as a percentage of GDP

Year	*Gross expenditure as a percentage of GDP*
1988-89	5·1
1989-90	5·1
1990-91	5·3
1991-92	5·7
[1]1992-93	6·1

[1] Forecast Outturn

Help Us to Help You Campaign

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money she expects to save by the Help Us to Help You campaign; what mechanisms are or will be put in place to monitor the savings that are being made by the campaign; what is the total budget for the Help Us to Help You campaign; and how much of that budget has already been spent.

Dr. Mawhinney: Help Us to Help You is an initiative to help the development of local campaigns to promote messages about how people can help the health service improve its efficiency and effectiveness and thereby help other patients. It will be for the national health service locally to decide on the exact form and resourcing of local campaigns. Any savings will depend upon the effectiveness of these local campaigns and cannot be estimated centrally.

All regional, district and family health service authorities, NHS trusts, directly-managed hospital units and community health councils have been sent copies of a Help Us to Help You information pack which gives advice about how to develop a local campaign. The total cost of producing the Help Us to Help You packs was £31,870. Copies of the packs are available in the Library.

Hip Operations

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hip operations were carried out during the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Hip operations in England[1]

Year	*[000s]*
1979	28·8
1980	31·7
1981	32·8
1982	33·2
1983	36·2
1984	36·9
1985	36·5
1986	41·0
1989-90	50·8

Sources:

1979-1986 Hospital Activity Analysis (Total hip replacement and other arthroplasty of hip).

1989-90 Hospital Episode Statistics (Total prosthetic replacement of hip joint, with/without cement, other replacement of hip joint and prosthetic replacement of head of femur, with/without cement, other replacement of head of femur).

Information for 1990-91 will be available in the autumn.

[1] Data for 1987-88 and 1988-89 is not available.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Street Children

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the United Kingdom-based non-governmental organisations assisting street children which are receiving funds from his Department in the current year, together with the amount of funding.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Complete information is not yet available for the current year. However, in 1992-93 we supported, through the joint funding scheme, the following NGOs specifically to assist street children:

Non-governmental organisation	£
Childhope	34,759
National Children's Home	33,176
World Vision	117,333
CAFOD	13,210
Oxfam	17,552

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total United Kingdom bilateral disbursement for aid to street children in 1991 and 1992; how much was spent in each country receiving this help; and what are the planned contributions, by country, for 1993.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We help street children through a number of specific activities but, more significantly, by integrating their needs into projects with a wider poverty focus. Information about the location and costs of all projects where street children may be among the beneficiaries could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Thalidomide

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations through the United Nations and other appropriate international bodies to warn of the dangers of thalidomide used in Brazil and elsewhere.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 14 June 1993]:* We have consulted the World Health Organisation about the use of thalidomide. WHO has confirmed that it recommends its use for the treatment of certain immunological reactions that may occur in leprosy patients either before or during specific treatment. However, because of its well-known embryopathic effects, WHO stipulates that the drug should be given only to men and postmenopausal women; women of child-bearing age should never be given thalidomide.

WHO guidance on the use of thalidomide is made available to national Governments, who are responsible for the control of the manufacture, distribution and use of this drug in their own countries.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General how many prosecutions handled by the Crown Prosecution Service have been initiated in magistrates courts in each of the most recent 12 months for which figures are available.

The Attorney-General: The figures are not available in the form requested by the hon. Member. I will write to him.

EMPLOYMENT

Training Credits

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which training and enterprise councils are currently using training credits within their adult training programmes.

Miss Widdecombe: In 1992-93, the following training and enterprise councils (TEC)s started national development projects involving the use of training credits in adult training programmes: Bradford; Barnsley and Doncaster; Rotherham; Manchester; South and East Cheshire; Hertfordshire; Birmingham; East London; and South Thames. Good practice from these projects will be available later this year.

In addition, South and East Cheshire TEC and Northumberland TEC are using training credits and a number of other TECs are considering or developing projects using existing resources.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 6 May, *Official Report*, column *236*, what are the appropriate circumstances in which the Government will encourage training and enterprise councils to consider adult credits.

Miss Widdecombe: Training and enterprise councils (TEC)s are required to set out a comprehensive approach to the delivery of adult training in their draft business plans, which are the subject of annual negotiation with my regional directors. The approach adopted by each TEC will depend on the circumstances prevailing in its area, and may include adult credits where appropriate.

Investors in People

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employers in each training and enterprise council area have been given the investors in people award; and what is the accreditation standard for this award.

Miss Widdecombe: The number of investors in people recognitions at 14 June by TEC area is as follows:

	Number
Avon	5
AZTEC	4
Barnsley and Doncaster	3
Bedfordshire	7
Birmingham	6
Bolton/Bury	4
Bradford	1
CAMBSTEC	1
CEWTEC	5
CILNTEC	1
Calderdale and Kirklees	1
Central England	3
CENTEC	3
County Durham	4
Coventry and Warwickshire	2
Cumbria	1
Devon and Cornwall	21
Dorset	8
ELTEC	2
Essex	3
Gloucestershire	14
Greater Nottingham	1
Gwent	4
HAWTEC	3

	Number
Hampshire	10
Heart of England	6
Humberside	2
Kent	1
Leeds	4
Lincolnshire	1
London East	2
METROTEC	5
Manchester	1
Merseyside	1
Mid Glamorgan	3
Milton Keynes	1
NORMIDTEC	2
Norfolk and Waveney	6
North Derbyshire	5
North Nottinghamshire	5
North West Wales	3
North Yorkshire	6
Northamptonshire	3
Northumberland	5
Rotherham	1
SOLOTEC	1
Sandwell	1
Sheffield	1
Shropshire	4
Somerset	2
South and East Cheshire	6
South Glamorgan	3
South Thames	1
Southern Derbyshire	3
Staffordshire	3
Suffolk	2
Surrey	3
Sussex	3
Teesside	4
Thames Valley Enterprise	17
Tyneside	7
Wakefield	1
Walsall	1
Wearside	2
West Wales	5
Wiltshire	5
Wolverhampton	2

A copy of the "Investors in People National Standard —Links to Assessment Indicators" will be placed in the Library.

Economically Inactive Men

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the percentage of economically inactive adult males for each district of England *(a)* in 1981 and *(b)* at the latest available date.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is available from the 1981 and 1991 censuses of population and can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Youth Training

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people were on youth training for each of the last six years.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is given in the table.

Youth Training Scheme/Youth Training[1]
Numbers in training
Great Britain
March 1988 to March 1993

March	Number
1988	375,600
1989	376,600
1990	343,800
1991	314,200
1992	290,400
[2]1993	288,100

Source: SPECTRUM, Training and Enterprise Council Operating Agreement (Annex J) and Scottish and Welsh Management Information.

[1] Includes Youth Credits.

[2] March 1993 figure is provisional.

Atomic Weapons Establishment

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action the Health and Safety Executive is taking to examine the safety of AWE Aldermaston; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: On 13 May 1993 the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) announced its intention to carry out a comprehensive review of health and safety management systems and standards of risk control at all atomic weapons establishment (AWE) premises, including Aldermaston.

The review team will include HSE specialist radiation, factory, explosives, and nuclear installations inspectors, employment medical advisers and experts in health and safety management systems.

A report will be published and HSE will be as open about the findings of the review as national security considerations will allow. HSE does not expect to complete the review until the spring of 1994 at the earliest.

AWE and the Ministry of Defence have indicated their full support and their wish to co-operate with the review.

Coal Mines Fatalities

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many fatalities per 1,000 man-shifts there were for each of the last 10 complete years for which statistics are available *(a)* in private coal mines, *(b)* among sub-contract workers doing work for British Coal and *(c)* amongst British Coal's employees.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A fatality rate based on man-shifts is not available for private mines.

The table shows the fatalities per 100,000 man-shifts at British Coal Corporation—BCC—mines from 1985-86, the first year for which a discrete rate for BCC mines was calculated by the Health and Safety Executive's—HSE—inspectorate of mines.

Fatal accidents to sub-contractors at BCC mines are included in the rates shown in the table. Separate records for sub-contractors have not been maintained by the HSE.

British coal corporation mines

Year	Fatal injury rate per 100,000 shifts[1]
1985-86	0·08
1986-87	0·05
1987-88	0·04

Year	Fatal injury rate per 100,000 shifts[1]
1988-89	0·08
1989-90	0·01
1990-91	0·07
1991-92	0·08
[2]1992-93	0·03

[1] Includes accidents to contractors working at BCC mines.
[2] Provisional.

Youth Training

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people entered employment in 1992 with no access to training.

Mr. Boswell: I have been asked to reply.

Information on young people entering employment with no access to training is not collected centrally.

WALES

European Funding

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what recent representations he has made to the European Commission on the subject of European funding.

Mr. Redwood: My predecessor met with Commissioner Millan on 15 March and also with Commissioners Steichen, Ruberti and Flynn on 2 April to discuss a wide range of issues of mutual interest. He also wrote to Commissioner Matutues since it proved impossible for them to meet. In each instance he invited them to visit Wales but we must wait and see whether these invitations are taken up. I also intend, however, to visit Brussels later in the year and to meet a number of the Commissioners.

Cattle Identification

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning the issuing of cattle identification documents; and what plans he has to review the administrative arrangements associated with the beef premium scheme in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: I have received several representations about cattle identification documents and am monitoring the introduction of the new scheme to see what scope exists to simplify arrangements.

Bellwin

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how much his Department has paid in each of the last five years under the Bellwin formula to local authorities in Wales; if he will list each receiving authority; how much they received; how much each authority had to spend before receiving any grant; and what percentage the grant represented of that total eligible expenditure by the authority on the particular emergency;

(2) how much his Department has paid in grant in each of the last five years under the Bellwin formula to local authorities in Wales; and if he will list *(a)* each receiving authority, *(b)* how much each authority had to spend up to and beyond the threshold before receiving grant and *(c)* what percentage the grant represented of that expenditure at *(b)*.

Mr. Redwood: The information required is given in the table:

Local Authorities Receiving Bellwin[2]	1988-89 Grant paid £	1988-89 Per cent [1]	1988-89 Threshold £	1990-91 Grant paid £	1990-91 Per cent [1]	1990-91 Threshold £	1991-92 Grant paid £	1991-92 Per cent [1]	1991-92 Threshold £	1992-93 Grant paid £	1992-93 Per cent [1]	1992-93 Threshold £
Dyfed CC	204,726	75	621,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Colwyn	—	—	—	527,726	85	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	—	—	—	772,017	95	14,200	274,649	95	—	—	—	—
Rhuddlan	—	—	—	195,892	85	14,246	340,236	85	—	—	—	—
Torfaen	—	—	—	32,164	75	22,307	—	—	—	—	—	—
Preseli Pembs	—	—	—	111,683	75	16,771	—	—	—	—	—	—
Swansea	—	—	—	3,764	75	44,882	—	—	—	—	—	—
Merthyr	—	—	—	46,573	75	14,128	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ynys Mon	—	—	—	23,448	85	16,069	7,155	85	—	—	—	—
Neath	—	—	—	612	75	16,046	—	—	—	—	—	—
Islwyn	—	—	—	30,659	75	15,899	—	—	—	40,008	85	19,800
Lliw Valley	—	—	—	3,128	75	15,042	—	—	—	—	—	—
Newport[3]	—	—	—	2,838	75	32,706	—	—	—	—	—	—
Aberconwy	—	—	—	3,292	85	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	—	—	—	246,352	95	13,357	9,232	95	—	—	—	—
Delyn	—	—	—	14,137	95	16,275	850	95	—	—	—	—
Clwyd	—	—	—	—	—	—	298,041	95	—	—	—	—
Dwyfor	—	—	—	—	—	—	13,253	75	[3]9,000	—	—	—
Blaenau Gwent	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	20,813	85	23,080
Rhondda	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	7,940	85	23,872
Cynon Valley	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	24,102	85	19,806
Total	204,726	—	—	2,014,285	—	—	943,416	—	—	92,863	—	—

Notes:
[1] Percentage rate of eligible expenditure.
[2] There was no Bellwin expenditure in 1989-90.
[3] Newport repaid all its grant in 1991-92 following audited claim (money surrendered to CFER).

[4] Audited returns for 1990-91; therefore 1990-91 thresholds apply.
[5] Grant in respect of 1987 storms (audited return).
[6] Unaudited class; final claims to be received in 1993-94.

Flood Damage

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will disregard emergency expenditure by local authorities on emergencies such as the recent flooding in west and north Wales from his calculations on capping limits for local authority expenditure in 1993-94.

Mr. Redwood: Local authorities have set their budgets for 1993-94 and as indicated in the reply given by my predecessor to the hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) on 26 April at columns *284-85*, the only authority in west or north Wales being considered for capping is Aberconwy borough council. On 21 May Aberconwy borough council challenged the proposed cap and put forward an alternative cap that is the same as its budget for 1993-94. I am still considering the authority's representations and I intend to announce my decision shortly.

SOCIAL SECURITY

New Age Travellers

Mr. Aspinwall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures are being taken to ensure that benefits payable to new age travellers comply with all the relevant rules.

Mr. Burt: New age travellers must satisfy the same conditions of entitlement to benefit as all other people. Those who claim benefit because of unemployment must be available for and actively seeking work, and all claimants are tested by the employment service to confirm that they are taking steps to find employment.

In order to ensure stricter compliance with Government objectives regulations were introduced in December 1992 to remove entitlement to income support from able-bodied single people and childless couples who do not actively seek work.

National Insurance

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the change in overall marginal tax rate, including national insurance, for each tax banding, if the national insurance upper earning limit were removed; and how much income that would raise in a full year for the Exchequer.

Mr. Hague: If the upper earnings limit for national insurance contributions were removed, the effect on marginal tax rates would be as follows:

Marginal tax rate including national insurance

[1] *Annual income*	*With an upper earnings limit per cent.*	*Without an upper earnings limit per cent.*
£3,445—£5,945	29	29
£5,946—£21,840	34	34
£21,841—£27,145	25	34
£27,146 and above	40	49

Note:
1. Assumes single person's tax allowance of £3,445.
2. Assumes that earnings for NI purposes are spread evenly throughout the year.
3. Annual upper earnings limit for the payment of NI contributions @ £21,840.

Removal of the limit would increase national insurance contribution yield by £2·7 billion in a full year.

Invalidity Benefits

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in the Dewsbury constituency are currently in receipt of invalidity payments; and how many were in receipt of invalidity payments in June 1992.

Mr. Scott: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard the chief executive of the Benefits Agency that the information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Staff

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which prisons are operating below their establishment for prison officers; and what is the shortfall of staff in each of these prisons.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Jim Callaghan, dated 17 June 1993.

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about officer staffing levels in Prison Service establishments.

The attached annex lists those establishments with fewer officers than their target staffing figures on 30 April. I should add that on 1 April we devolved to governors responsibility for recruiting prison officers and deciding the number and mix of staff within their running costs budgets.

Establishments where officer (including principal and senior officers and specialists) staff in post was below the target staffing figure on 30 April 1993.

[1] *Establishment*	*Shortfall on target staffing figure*
Ashwell	2
Askham Grange	2
Belmarsh	11
Birmingham	11
Blantyre House	1
Brinsford	1
Canterbury	4
Cookham Wood	3
Dartmoor	1
Dover	3
Downview	2
Drake Hall	3
East Sutton Park	1
Elmley	4
Erestoke	3

Establishment[1]	*Shortfall on target staffing figure*
Featherstone	1
Feltham	3
Full Sutton	11
Glen Parva	2
Grendon/Spring Hill	5
Guys Marsh	9
Haslar	2
Hewell Grange	3
Holloway	4
Kingston	1
Kirkham	3
Lancaster	5
Leicester	1
Lindholme	4
Littlehey	1
Liverpool	3
Manchester	11
Moorland	2
Morton Hall	1
North Sea Camp	1
Nottingham	1
Onley	3
Parkhurst	2
Pentonville	5
Portland	9
Preston	5
Pucklechurch	5
Reading	2
Send	1
Shrewsbury	6
Stafford	6
Standford Hill	1
Stocken	1
Stoke Heath	3
Swaleside	1
Swansea	6
Swinfen Hall	3
Wakefield	6
Wandsworth	7
Whitemoor	5
Winchester	2
Wormwood Scrubs	3
Wymott	3

[1] Excluding new establishments in the process of being staffed and establishments with accommodation out of use for change of role or for refurbishment: Durham, Eastwood Park, High Down, Hollesley Bay, Lancaster Farms, Woodhill.

Criminal Records

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when his consultation paper on criminal records will be issued; and what provision will be made in respect of article 13 of the EC data protection directive in connection with the provision to prohibit a demand by a third party on a person that he should exercise his right of access to data in order to communicate that data to the third party.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I expect to publish a consultation document in the course of the summer which, amongst other things, will refer to article 13 of the draft EC directive.

Market Testing

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all the market tests that have taken place in his Department since November 1992 and indicate, in each case, whether the result was the maintenance of in-house provision, or whether the service was contracted out.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Home Office functions which have been subject to market testing or contracting out since November 1992 is listed showing, in cases where the exercise has been completed, whether the result was the maintenance of in-house provision or whether the service was contracted out. The table also shows those market tests which have been discontinued. Except where an outcome is indicated, work is continuing.

Non-prison market testing
Hendon Data Centre
Forensic Science Service Estate Management
Internal Audit
Accountancy Advice
Passport Agency Records Office—discontinued
Design and Illustration Branch
Home Office Stationery Supplies
Computing Services (ED5)
Headquarters Catering Services
IND Catering Services
Library Service—discontinued
Central Training Branch
Typing Services
Record Management Services
Reprographic Services
Office Facilities Management (ED1)
Personnel Management Division Recruitment
Immigration Service Recruitment (IND PMU)
IND Statistics Security-Guard Service

Non-prison contracting out
Forensic Science Service Waste Disposal—contracted out
Passport Agency Stationery Supplies
Passport Agency Production of Blank Passports[1]

Prison
Directorate of Works Headquarters Training
Dog Service
Prison Service College Facilities Management
Registries and Post Rooms
Prison Service Information Technology Group
Fleet Management
Superannuation Administration
Canteens (Prisoners' shops)
Warehouse and Distribution—retained in-house
Manchester Prison

Prison: contracting-out
Education[2]
Court Escorts—contracted out
Blakenhurst Prison—contracted out

[1] Contract awarded to HMSO.
[2] Just over half has been completed.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy on the principle in article 13 of the EC data protection directive seeking to prohibit a demand by a third party on a person that he should exercise his right of access to data in order to communicate that data to the third party.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government are sympathetic towards the concern which has been expressed about what is known as enforced subject access, but have encountered problems both of principle and practice in devising means of preventing it.

Bail Hostels

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the north Yorkshire bail hostel will be used for *(a)* people who would otherwise be remanded on bail in their own home, *(b)* people who would otherwise be remanded in custody, *(c)* ex-offenders not awaiting trial and *(d)* only for people from north Yorkshire.

Mr. Maclean: Bail hostels are solely for bailees who are deemed suitable by the court to reside in a hostel and who might otherwise have to be remanded in custody. They are unlikely to be used for people who could be bailed to their home address. Most of the residents will be local people, but hostels may accept referrals from other areas.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what provision he has made for the payment of compensation to people living in the vicinity of Alexander hotel, York who have suffered financial loss as a result of plans to use the hotel as a bail hostel.

Mr. Maclean: None.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the suitability of the Alexander hotel in Boroughbridge road in York for use as a bail hostel.

Mr. Maclean: The North Yorkshire probation service considered 16 possible sites for a bail hostel. A feasibility study indicated that the Alexander hotel was the best option in terms of operational needs and value for money.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for what reasons the Home Office has decided to open a bail hostel in north Yorkshire.

Mr. Maclean: North Yorkshire is one of eight probation areas in England and Wales which does not have an approved bail or probation-bail hostel. Outline approval for a hostel was given in 1991 on the basis that there was a sufficient number of defendants dealt with by the courts in and around York to justify a hostel there, bearing in mind that, when the courts wished to grant bail with a condition of residence in an approved hostel, north Yorkshire probation service had to rely on hostel places in other areas.

Blakenhurst Prison

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the projected staffing levels for Blakenhurst prison by job title/function.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 17 June 1993]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. John McAllion dated 17 June 1993:

HM PRISON BLAKENHURST

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question on the projected staffing levels for Blakenhurst Prison by job title/function.

HM Prison Blakenhurst has a Senior Management Team of nine. It is envisaged that when Blakenhurst is operating at full capacity it will employ a total workforce of approximately 300 staff of whom 276 will be certificated Prison Custody Officers.

To achieve optimum effectiveness and efficiency it is the contractor's intention to deploy staff imaginatively and flexibly by matching the requirements of the prison to the actual duties to be performed.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Company Investigations

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if the companies investigations branch of his Department will obtain a copy of the book, details of which have been submitted to him.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 15 June 1993]:* All evidence is carefully considered by the appropriate authorities where matters may lead to investigation by my Department.

French Security Services

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has made to his French counterpart in relation to activities by French intelligence agents in British aerospace and defence firms.

Mr. Heseltine: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on Monday 7 June, *Official Report*, column *12*.

Matrix Churchill

Mr. Ainsworth: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consideration is now being given to payment of compensation to employees of Matrix Churchill who suffered financial loss as a result of the collapse of that company.

Miss Widdecombe: I have been asked to reply.

The Employment Department made payments to former employees of Matrix Churchill last year totalling something over £950,000 covering redundancy payments, arrears of pay, and compensation for lack of statutory notice. The payments made were the normal statutory payments made to employees of insolvent companies under employment legislation.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Departmental Expenditure

Sir Rhodes Boyson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will publish the total amount of expenditure on provision within the responsibility of his Department in *(a)* England, *(b)* Greater London and *(c)* the south-east, excluding Greater London, for each year from 1982-83 distinguishing between current and capital expenditure, though excluding local authority credit approvals/capital allocations.

Mr. Brooke: The information is not available within my Department and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost. The great majority of this Department's expenditure goes to agencies and bodies sponsored by the Department of National Heritage. My Department seeks to ensure that the money is used in

pursuit of the aims and objectives of the bodies concerned, but detailed spending decisions are the responsibility of these bodies. No systematic analysis of expenditure by geographical region is made.

Correspondence

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the reasons behind current delays in his Department's correspondence.

Mr. Brooke: The volume of correspondence, concentrated in one or two areas of particular interest, has been such that there have been unacceptable delays in replies in some cases. But now that my Department is in two locations instead of seven, with the benefits this should bring in terms of information technology and greater ease of communication, I hope that it will be possible to avoid backlogs and quicken the pace at which my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State and I reply to letters.

SCOTLAND

School Meals

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average price of a school meal in *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools in cash and real terms in each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The average cost to pupils of schooi meals is not collected centrally. Pupils can obtain either a fixed meal at a set charge or a cafeteria style meal for which the charge will vary depending on the individual pupil's choice. The tables give details of the fixed price meal charge levied by each regional authority in each year since 1979 in cash and in real terms. The level of the charge made is at the discretion of the regional authority.

Charge for a fixed price school meal at January census in cash terms and real terms

Pence

Region or Island authority	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Borders	30 (84)	35 (84)	35 (71)	40 (74)	42 (72)	44 (72)	46 (72)	48 (71)	50 (72)	50 (68)	50 (64)	50 (60)	55 (61)	60 (62)
Central	30 (84)	35 (84)	35 (71)	35 (65)	40 (69)	45 (74)	45 (70)	50 (74)	55 (79)	58 (79)	60 (76)	62 (74)	68 (75)	72 (75)
Dumfries and Galloway	30 (84)	35 (84)	40 (81)	45 (83)	50 (86)	50 (82)	52 (81)	55 (82)	58 (83)	61 (83)	60 (76)	60 (72)	[1]65 (72) [2]55 (61)	[1]65 (67) [2]55 (57)
Fife	30 (84)	35 (84)	35 (71)	40 (74)	45 (77)	48 (79)	50 (78)	52 (77)	55 (79)	50 (68)	50 (64)	50 (60)	50 (55)	60 (62)
Grampian	30 (84)	35 (84)	42 (85)	[3]42 (77) [4]45 (83)	[3]42 (72) [4]45 (77)	[3]45 (74) [4]55 (90)	[3]50 (78) [4]60 (94)	[3]55 (82) [4]65 (96)	[3]58 (83) [4]68 (98)	[3]60 (82) [4]70 (95)	[3]63 (80) [4]73 (93)	Not available	Not available	Not available
Highland	30 (84)	35 (84)	41 (81)	50 (92)	50 (86)	50 (82)	55 (86)	55 (82)	65 (93)	65 (89)	70 (89)	74 (88)	80 (88)	85 (88)
Lothian	30 (84)	35 (84)	35 (71)	35 (65)	45 (77)	45 (74)	[3]50 (78) [4]55 (86)	[3]50 (74) [4]55 (82)	[3]50 (72) [4]55 (79)	[3]50 (68) [4]55 (75)	[3]55 (70) [4]60 (76)	[3]55 (66) [4]60 (72)	[3]60 (66) [4]65 (72)	[3]70 (72) [4]75 (78)
Strathclyde	30 (84)	35 (84)	40 (81)	45 (83)	50 (86)	53 (87)	55 (86)	58 (86)	61 (88)	63 (86)	64 (81)	67 (80)	79 (87)	Not available
Tayside	30 (84)	35 (84)	40 (81)	45 (83)	50 (86)	[3]45 (74) [4]50 (82)	50 (78)	55 (82)	60 (86)	60 (82)	65 (83)	65 (78)	65 (72)	65 (67)
Orkney	30 (84)	35 (84)	35 (71)	40 (74)	50 (86)	50 (82)	50 (78)	55 (82)	60 (86)	60 (82)	60 (76)	70 (83)	70 (77)	[3]70 (72) [4]75 (78)
Shetland	30 (84)	35 (84)	35 (71)	35 (65)	35 (60)	45 (74)	50 (78)	50 (74)	55 (79)	60 (82)	60 (76)	65 (78)	75 (83)	75 (78)
Western Isles	30 (84)	35 (84)	35 (71)	40 (74)	45 (77)	60 (99)	60 (94)	65 (96)	65 (93)	65 (89)	70 (89)	70 (83)	70 (77)	75 (78)

[1] Standard meal.
[2] Mini meal.
[3] Primary.
[4] Secondary.

Notes:
1. Except where indicated otherwise the same charge applied to both primary and secondary schools.
2. Prior to 1981 charges for a fixed price meal were set by statutory regulation on national basis.
3. Price in real terms at 1992-93 prices are shown in brackets.

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the level of public expenditure on the school meal service in each year since 1979 in cash and real terms.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 17 June 1993]:*

The information is as follows:

Year	Cash (net expenditure) (£ thousands)	Adjusted to 1992-93 prices using the GDP deflator (£ thousands)
1978-79	34,057	95,064
1979-80	37,939	90,761
1980-81	38,495	77,825
1981-82	39,896	73,553
1982-83	40,234	69,246
1983-84	41,828	68,803
1984-85	41,859	65,532
1985-86	42,847	63,606
1986-87	44,638	64,197
1987-88	46,503	63,393
1988-89	46,046	58,510
1989-90	50,119	59,760
1990-91	50,615	55,875
1991-92	59,403	61,482

Nursing Homes

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps are currently taken to ensure *(a)* proper inspection of nursing homes' care of elderly residents and *(b)* regular visits by general practitioners to monitor the health of residents and the carrying out of any necessary treatment, including removal to hospital.

Mr. Stewart: Under the Nursing Homes Registration (Scotland) Act 1938, as amended, health boards as registering authorities have a statutory requirement to visit and inspect all nursing homes in their area, including any register or records required, at least twice a year and to carry out spot checks at any reasonable time.

The person registered must provide or make arrangements for the provision of medical services for any residents in the home and must ensure that arrangements for dealing with medical emergencies of residents are agreed with the health board. Residents are also entitled to receive visits from their own general practitioner on request.

Strathblane Hospital

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to intervene to prevent the closure of Strathblane hospital for respite care for mentally and severely handicapped children.

Mr. Stewart: The organisation of hospital and respite care for the Greater Glasgow area is a matter for the health board. No decisions have been made affecting Strathblane hospital, any such proposal would be subject to public consultation and thereafter referred to Ministers for final decision.

Water Privatisation

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions his Department has been holding with Strathclyde regional council on water privatisation.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 16 June 1993]:* There have been no such discussions.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information his departmental officials have given to the press concerning discussions between his Department and Strathclyde regional council on water privatisation.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 16 June 1993]:* There have been no such discussions, and no such information has been given.

Manoucher Tehrani

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to review the case of Manoucher Tehrani, former consultant surgeon at Inverclyde royal infirmary; what consideration he has given to the recent papers supplied to him by Mr. Tehrani; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 17 June 1993]:* My right hon. Friend received certain papers about Mr. M. Tehrani from the Tehrani action group to which he has given consideration. He has concluded that it is not necessary or appropriate for an inquiry to be conducted in relation to the matters raised by the action group.

Census

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the interval between holding and publishing the results of the census in *(a)* 1981 and *(b)* 1991; and if he will make a statement on the validity of the results of the 1991 census.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 17 June 1993]:* Census results are published as a series of monitors and fuller reports for each region and for Scotland as a whole, followed by a series of reports for specific topics—mainly for Great Britain but with some Scottish reports. Comparison with the 1981 census publication dates is given in the table.

	1981 Census	1991 Census
CENSUS DAY	5 April 1981	21 April 1991
Preliminary Report, Scotland	June 1981	July 1991
Region Monitors		
Start	January 1982	June 1992
End	June 1982	October 1992
Scotland Monitor	July 1982	December 1992
Region Reports[1]		
Start	September 1982	December 1992
End	March 1983	April 1993
Scotland Report		
Part 1	August 1983	June 1993
Part 2	December 1983	August 1993[2]
Topic Reports		
Start	April 1983	February 1993
End	September 1984	Spring 1994[2]

Owing to some new questions and more detailed analyses, the 1991 Census publications contain roughly twice as many statistics as their 1981 equivalents.

[1] Region reports were published in four parts per region for 1981 and two parts for 1991.

[2] Planned dates.

Computer processing of 1991 data was delayed as a result of a problem discovered during a routine data quality audit. Some 400,000 people in Great Britain, who were apparently not students, had completed the question on term time address as though they were students, causing them to be wrongly allocated in initial processing. More information about this problem is given in "Census Newsletter No. 18", a copy of which is in the Library. The full publication programme is still expected to be completed more quickly than was the case for the 1981 census.

On the validity of the results, the Registrar General included a statement entitled "1991 Census under-enumeration: guidance for users in Scotland" as Annex A to the 1991 "Census Monitor for Scotland", a copy of which is in the Library. This indicated that the main 1991 census tables are in fact more complete than the equivalent 1981 tables and that the effects of under-enumeration in the 1991 census are likely to be unimportant for the majority of users.

Further information on the coverage and quality of the census results will be published in a series of OPCS reports based on analysis of the census validation survey for Great Britain.

DEFENCE

Trident

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the factors that will bear upon his Department's decision as to the number of nuclear warheads that will be deployed on the Trident submarines.

Mr. Aitken: We will deploy on Trident only the minimum number of warheads we judge necessary to provide effective deterrence, presenting any potential aggressor with the prospect of unacceptable damage.

Defence Export Services Organisation

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how long the contract of the current head of the Defence Export Services Organisation has to run; and what is his annual salary.

Mr. Aitken: The present head of Defence Export Services, Sir Alan Thomas, has one year still to run of his five-year contract on secondment from Raytheon Europe Ltd. His current annual salary is £128,150 plus a performance bonus of up to an annual maximum of £30,000.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of staff of the Defence Export Services Organisation are seconded from industry; and what functions they perform.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 18 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *671*.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many staff are employed in each of the overseas offices of the Defence Export Services Organisation; what is the estimated annual cost of the office in each case; and how many staff are employed in the London office.

Mr. Aitken: The following is a breakdown of the DESO overseas offices, the number of staff employed in each office and the 1993-94 estimated cost of each office:

Office	*Staff numbers*	*Estimated costs £'000*
Riyadh	2	84
Kuwait	1	76
New Delhi	3	78
Kuala Lumpar	7	154
Seoul	3	65
Canberra	2	77
Jakarta	4	63
Bangkok	2	86
Ankara	1	58

Note: 263 staff are employed in London.

Low Flying

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-level flying hours were flown by the RAF in each of the past five years.

Mr. Hanley: The total numbers of hours booked—but not necessarily flown—at low level in the United Kingdom by all users of the UK low-flying system in each of the past five years were as follows:

Year	*Hours booked*
1988	106,100
1989	111,037
1990	110,795
1991	96,943
1992	108,806

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many representations he has received on the subject of low-level flying; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: In the past 12 months we have received 5,698 such representations from members of the public and 272 from hon. Members.

Challenger Tank

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he intends to proceed with the Challenger 1 upgrade programme.

Mr. Aitken: Studies to examine how best to equip the Army's six Challenger 1 tank regiments have now been completed, and the results are being evaluated. An announcement on the way forward will be made as soon as this evaluation is completed.

Rosyth Minesweeper Flotilla

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 18 May, *Official Report*, column *146*, whether contingency plans exist to

base the minesweeper flotilla in either Portsmouth or Plymouth if the Royal Navy's surface fleet presence at Rosyth is ended; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: We have no plans to end the minor war vessel presence at Rosyth naval base.

Aldermaston

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action he proposes to take to improve the safety of AWE Aldermaston following concerns expressed after inspections by the Health and Safety Executive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: AWE is, and will continue to be, subject to independent inspection by the Health and Safety Executive—HSE—under the terms of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The establishment co-operates fully in these inspections and acts upon any recommendations made by the HSE. We will continue to develop safety improvements at AWE wherever possible.

Royal Naval Engineering College, Manadon

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a copy of the investment appraisal study carried out into the Royal Naval engineering college at Manadon.

Mr. Hanley: A copy of the consultative document relating to our proposals for in-service first degree engineer officer training conducted at the Royal Naval engineering college at Manadon, Plymouth was placed in the Library of the House on 25 May 1993. This document contains information on the financial implications of our proposals.

"Panorama" Interview

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what considerations underlay the decision by the Minister for Defence Procurement to decline an interview to "Panorama" for its programme broadcast on 14 June;

(2) what considerations underlay the decision not to allow the administrative director of AWE Aldermaston to answer questions on "Panorama" on 14 June.

Mr. Aitken: My Department chose not to participate directly in the "Panorama" programme because we believed that the treatment would be neither even-handed nor objective.

Dartmouth Naval College

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of Dartmouth naval college.

Mr. Hanley: I have nothing to add to the answer that my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton) gave to my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) on 24 March, *Official Report*, column *612*.

Portland Naval Base

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the cumulative net present values for the Portland and Devonport options in the investment appraisal which supported his Department's decision to close Portland naval base; and what is the difference between these options.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Member to the investment appraisal figures given in annex A of the Portland naval base consultative document, a copy of which was placed in the Library of the House on 12 November 1992.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Bosnia

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many breaches of the UN no-fly zone have taken place over Bosnia since it was established; and if he will list the reported breaches by month.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The no-fly zone over Bosnia was established by UN Security Council resolution 781 of 9 October 1992. Between 22 October 1992—when monitoring of the zone began—and 9 June 1993, the UN secretariat recorded 600 violations of the zone, as follows:

Month	*Number*
22-31 October 1992	13
November 1992	213
December 1992	142
January 1993	35
February 1993	58
March 1993	38
April 1993	42
May 1993	20
1-9 June 1993	39

Civil and Political Rights

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the states that have signed *(a)* the international covenant on civil and political rights, *(b)* the optional protocol to the covenant and *(c)* the second protocol to the covenant, indicating the year in which each state signed.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested by the hon. Member is contained in the UN publications "Human Rights: Status of International Instruments" and "Human Rights: Status of International Instruments: Chart of Ratifications", the most recent copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Public Expenditure White Paper

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were *(a)* the publication costs and *(b)* the price to the public, of the public expenditure White Paper in 1979 and its equavalent, including each of the departmental reports, in 1993.

Mr. David Davis: I have been asked to reply.

The price of the Public Expenditure White Paper (Cmnd 7439) was £4·25 in 1979. The combined price of all individual departmental reports and the accompanying statistical supplement to the "Autumn Statement" (Cms 2201-2219) was £261·25 in 1993. HMSO sells complete sets at the discounted price of £175.

The costs of printing, publishing and distribution were borne by HMSO which aims to recover these from sales revenue.

Tax Avoidance

Mr. Stern: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the Government's policy towards countering tax avoidance.

Mr. Dorrell: The Government remain determined to prevent the growth of tax avoidance to the level that existed before 1979. And over the last 14 years a large number of measures has been introduced to counter avoidance, including some in the present Finance Bill.

Any taxpayer is entitled to order his affairs within the law to reduce to a minimum the amount of tax which he is likely to pay and is entitled to be protected against retrospective action by the Government or by Parliament which would reduce that right. But there is a point when avoidance can be regarded as improper and unacceptable, deserving to be looked at critically, and deserving to be stopped because it amounts to a defiance of, or an escape from, the underlying intention of the legislation.

In countering tax avoidance, the Government will continue to use a number of techniques which have proved successful in the past; these include rendering avoidance ineffective from the date of a clear announcment to do so, rather than necessarily waiting for the passage of legislation, and ensuring that Inland Revenue clearance procedures are not abused to the extent that they become part of the mechanism for constructing avoidance schemes.

EDUCATION

English Grammar

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment the curriculum authorities have made of the importance of a knowledge of grammar and of syntax in contributing to an understanding of English literature.

Mr. Robin Squire: This would have been one of the issues considered by the National Curriculum Council in drawing up its recommendations for revisions to the English curriculum, which formed the basis of proposals published by my right hon. Friend in April. In the programme of study for reading, the importance of a knowledge of grammatical structure to the full understanding of literature is recognised from the earliest stage.

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to improve the teaching of spelling, punctuation and grammar in English.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend has recently published proposals for revisions to national curriculum English which give a strengthened emphasis to spelling, punctuation and grammar. In addition, 5 per cent. of the marks in all GCSE written examinations are now allocated to these matters.

St. Mary's School, Hendon

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he expects to determine the application by St. Mary's school, Hendon, to become a grant-maintained school.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend expects to make a decision on this application in the very near future.

Religious and Physical Education

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the calculated percentage curriculum time allocation for *(a)* religious education and *(b)* physical education in primary and secondary schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is available for secondary schools from the 1992 secondary school staffing survey which collected data from representative sample of maintained secondary schools in England. The table shows the percentage of total pupil periods recorded as having been spent on religious education and physical education. No recent information is available for primary schools or 6th form students in schools.

Year group	*Religious education per cent.*	*Physical education per cent.*
7	4·2	9·1
8	4·2	8·9
9	4·3	8·3
10	2·8	7·7
11	2·6	7·2

Education (Parental Complaints)

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to disseminate the names and addresses of organisations which assist in parental complaints about local education.

Mr. Robin Squire: None. Statutory rights of appeal or complaint have been publicised in the parents charter.

Humanism

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether he will make a statement on the inclusion of humanism in agreed syllabuses for religious education.

Mr. Robin Squire: Humanism is not a religion and should not be taught in religious education lessons as if it were. A syllabus may, however, include teaching about people, such as humanists, who do not believe in God but nonetheless have a code of moral values; or give examples of secular equivalents to practices which have a religious background, such as the marriage service or the taking of an oath.

School Syllabuses

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what action he proposes to take in the case of local education authorities which have made revisions to their agreed syllabuses since the Education Reform Act 1988 which in the opinion of the National Curriculum Council fail to meet the legal requirements.

Mr. Robin Squire: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Schools gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam on 30 March 1993, *Official Report* column *155*.

Graduation Tax

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to implement a graduation tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: None.

School Tests

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the cost of this year's tests for *(a)* key stage 1 pupils and *(b)* key stage 3 pupils.

Mr. Robin Squire: The estimated costs of producing and distributing the statutory tests for 1993 in English, mathematics, science and Welsh at key stage 1—7-year-olds—is £1,230,000. The estimated cost of the non-mandatory tests at this key stage is £1,470,000.

The cost of the statutory tests in English, mathematics, science, technology and Welsh at key stage 3—14-year-olds—is £4,090,000. This includes support materials.

Bullying

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many schools are using video equipment as a method to control and monitor bullying in schools; and what results have been achieved by these experiments.

Mr. Forth: This information is not collected centrally.

TRANSPORT

Warren Spring Laboratory

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what will be the impact on his budgets for research into air pollution from motor vehicles of recent announcements relating to Warren Spring Laboratory.

Mr. Key: Transitional costs of moving work from Warren Spring Laboratory to the new national environmental technology centre will not fall upon the Department's budgets in the area mentioned.

We shall continue to let contracts to the best available contractors and, if the new centre maintains the same standards as the laboratory, I would expect the volume of work placed there to be at a similar level.

West Coast Main Line

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with British Rail about funding and safety of the west coast main line.

Mr. Freeman: Re-equipping the west coast main line is an investment priority. I understand that British Rail has set aside funds for design work and plans to begin renewing the infrastructure next year. Decisions on the precise phasing of the renewal programme will need to have regard to public expenditure constraints.

There is no question of passenger safety being jeopardised in any way: BR has a statutory duty to operate safely.

Cycling

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what initiatives his Department is planning to take to improve conditions for cycling in London.

Mr. Norris: Most cycling takes place on local authority roads which comprise 96 per cent. of the London network. The remainder are DOT trunk roads.

We are helping to improve conditions for cycling in London in the following ways:

—by taking full account of the needs of cyclists when planning trunk road construction and improvements;

—supporting the 1,000 mile cycle network being developed by London Cycling Forum.

—providing capital funding support for cycle schemes on roads of more than local importance when they comprise or form part of a local safety scheme. The new "package approach" for capital schemes will provide flexibility for boroughs to submit joint bids for road proposals from 1994-95 and should facilitate the development of inter-borough cycle routes;

—providing advice and guidance to boroughs on the design and construction of cycling facilities via local transport notes and traffic advisory leaflets.

ENVIRONMENT

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will extend the range of local services put out to compulsory competitive tendering.

Mr. Baldry: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer the then Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for local government gave to the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith) on 24 May 1993, *Official Report*, column *366*.

Dockyards

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those dockyard facilities in the United Kingdom owned and operated by his Department, indicating this type of work undertaken and the numbers of people directly employed.

Mr. Baldry: The Department of the Environment does not own or operate any dockyard facilities.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 15 June at column *543*, if he will also deposit in the Library the previous submission of Castle Point borough council dated 17 March referred to in paragraph 1.2 of the submission relating to limitation of council tax dated 27 April which he deposited in the Library.

Mr. Baldry: I have today placed copies of this document in the Library.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

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SESSION 1992–93

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SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

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Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R=first reading, 2R=second reading, Money res=money resolution, Com=Committee stage, Rep=Report stage, 3R=third reading, amendt/amendts=amendment/amendments, *=matter taken formally, without debate.

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